

The Works of
ALEXANDER PUSHKIN



DELPHI CLASSICS

THE WORKS OF ALEXANDER PUSHKIN

(1799-1837)



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A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Pushkin'.

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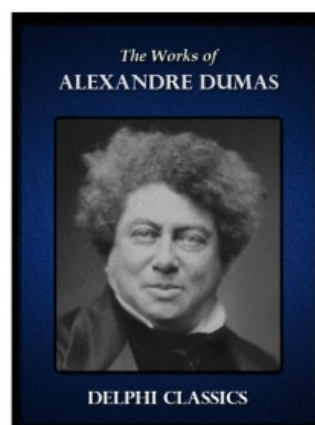
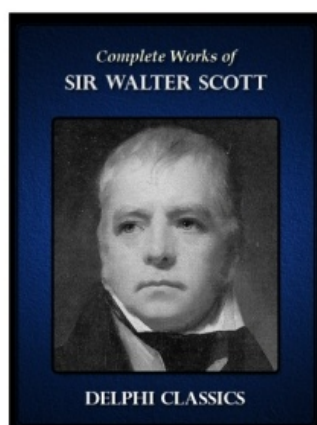
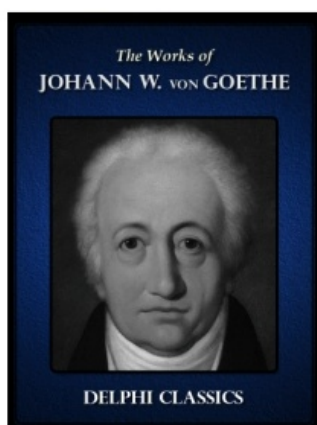
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**THE WORKS OF
ALEXANDER PUSHKIN**



By Delphi Classics, 2012

The Poetry



Baumanskaya Ulitsa, Moscow, Pushkin's birthplace



A memorial bust marking Pushkin's birthplace; the house has been demolished and a school now stands in its place.



Pushkin's father, Sergei Lvovich Pushkin (1767–1848), was from a distinguished family of the Russian nobility, tracing its ancestry back to the 12th century.



Pushkin's mother, Nadezhda Ossipovna Gannibal (1775–1836), was descended from German and Scandinavian nobility.

SHORT POEMS



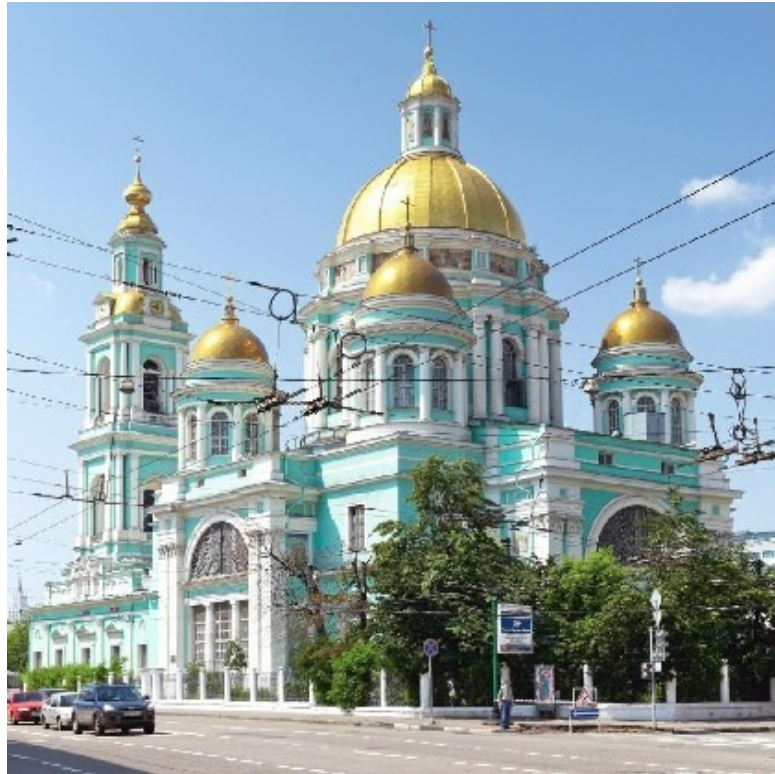
Translated by Charles Edward Turner, George Borrow and Ivan Panin

Universally revered as the greatest of all the Russian poets and the founder of his country's modern literature, Pushkin was born into the nobility in Moscow in 1799. Although destined to have a tragically short life, Pushkin had published his first poem at the age of fifteen and he was already widely recognised as being a poetic genius at the time of his graduation from the Tsarskoye Selo Lyceum.

For much of his literary career, Pushkin was censored under the strict surveillance of the Tsar's political police and he was often unable to publish his works. His political poems led to an interrogation by the Petersburg governor-general and the great poet even endured exile to his mother's rural estate in Mikhailovskoe from 1824 to 1826.

Pushkin is celebrated for having developed a highly nuanced level of language that went on to influence the course of Russia literature. He is also credited for augmenting the Russian lexicon, much like how Shakespeare influenced the English language. Pushkin's fashioning of new words, his use of rich vocabulary and his highly sensitive handling of style all laid the foundations for what we now consider to be modern Russian literature. In spite of his brief life, Pushkin bequeathed to posterity works of almost every literary genre, spanning lyric poetry, narrative poetry, unfinished novels, short stories, plays, critical essays and literary epistles.

In this section, readers can explore a selection of some of the poet's finest lyrical poems, including *To K* — , now widely regarded as being the most famous Russian poem. Pushkin's short poems feature a large variety of themes, with personal, humorous and political works, as well as some of the most beauty love poetry ever written.



The Epiphany Cathedral, Moscow, where Pushkin was christened



Pushkin, c.1801

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Pushkin, aged 20

TO — (KERN)

This poem was written in July 1825 and dedicated to Anna Petrovna Kern (1800-1879). It has the distinction of being labelled the most famous poem in the Russian language. This anonymous translation is followed by the original Russian text and then a comparison of the two texts.

I still recall the marvellous moment:
When you appeared before my gaze
Like a ghost, like a fleeting spirit,
Like soul of the purest grace.

In torturing fruitless melancholy,
In vanity and loud chaos
I've always heard your gentle voice
And glimpsed your features in my dreams.

As years passed and winds scattered
My long-past hopes, and in those days,
I lacked your voice's divine spell
And the bless'd features of your face.

Held in darkness and separation,
My days dragged in strife.
Lacking faith and inspiration,
Lacking tears and love and life.

But the time arrives; my soul awakens,
And again you appear before me
Like a ghost, like a fleeting spirit,
Like the soul of purest grace.

Again my heart beats in rapture,
Again everything awakens:
My long-past faith and inspiration,
And the tears and life and love.



Anna Petrovna Kern (1800-1879), a socialite, memoirist and the poet's married lover

К ***

Я помню чудное мгновенье:
Передо мной явилась ты,
Как мимолетное виденье,
Как гений чистой красоты.

В томленье грусти безнадежной
В тревогах шумной суеты
Звучал мне долго голос нежный
И снились милые черты.

Шли годы. Бурь порыв мятежной
Рассеял прежние мечты,
И я забыл твой голос нежный,
Твой небесные черты.

В глуши, во мраке заточенья
Тянулись тихо дни мои
Без божества, без вдохновенья,
Без слез, без жизни, без любви.

Душе настало пробужденье:
И вот опять явилась ты,
Как мимолетное виденье,
Как гений чистой красоты.

И сердце бьется в упоенье,
И для него воскресли вновь
И божество, и вдохновенье,
И жизнь, и слезы, и любовь.

TO — (KERN) COMPARISON

Я помню чудное мгновенье:
I still recall the marvellous moment:
Передо мной явилась ты,
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Again my heart beats in rapture,
И для него воскресли вновь
Again everything awakens:
И божество, и вдохновенье,
My long-past faith and inspiration,
И жизнь, и слезы, и любовь.
And the tears and life and love.

*Poems Translated by Charles Edward Turner and
George Borrow*

THE DREAMER

The moon pursues her stealthy course,
The shades grow gray upon the hill,
Silence has fallen on the stream,
Fresh from the valley blows the wind;
The songster of spring days has hushed
His notes in waste of gloomy groves,
The herds are couched along the fields,
And calm the flight of midnight hour.

And night the peaceful ingle-nook
Has with her misty livery clad;
In stove the flames have ceased to dart,
And candle down to socket burned;
The saintly face of household gods
Now darkly gloom from modest shrine,
And taper pale in dimness burns
Before the guardians of home.

With head in hand bent lowly down,
In sweet forgetfulness deep plunged,
I lose myself in fancy dreams,
And lie awake on lonely couch;
As with the weird dark shades of night,
Illumined by the soft moon's rays,
Wingèd dreams, in hurrying crowds,
Flock down and strongly seize my soul.

And now flows forth a soft, soft voice,
The golden chords in music tremble;
And in the hour when all is still,
The dreamer young begins his song,
With secret ache of soul possessed
And dreams that come from God alone,
With flying hand he boldly smites
The breathing strings of heavenly lyre.

Blessed is he who, born in lowly hut,
Prays not for fortune or for wealth;
From him great Jove, with watchful eyes,
Will turn mishap that teems with ruin;

At eve, on lotos flowers couched,
He lies enwrapped in softest sleep;
Nor harshest sound of warrior's trump
Has power to stir him from his dream.

Let glory, with her daring front,
Strike loudly on her noisy shield;
In vain she tempts me from afar,
With skinny finger red in blood;
In vain war's gaudy banners float,
Or battle-ranks their pomp display;
Peace has higher charms for gentle heart, -
Nor do I care for glory's prize.
In solitude my blood is tamed,
And tranquilly the days pass by:
From God I have the gift of song,
Of gifts the rarest, most divine;
And never has the Muse betrayed me:
Be thou with me, oh goddess dear,
The vilest home or desert wild
Shall have a beauty of their own.

In dusky dawn of golden days
The untried singer thou hast blessed,
As with a wreath of myrtle fresh
Thou didst encrown his childish brow,
And, bringing with thee light from heaven,
Radiant made his humble cell;
And, gently breathing, thou didst lean
O'er his cradle with blessing sweet.

For ever be my friend and guide
Even to the threshold of the grave!
O'er me hover with gentlest dreams,
And shroud me with thy shielding wings!
Banish far all doubt and sorrow,
Possess the mind with fond deceit,
A glory shed o'er my far life,
And scatter wide its darkest gloom!

Thus peace shall bless my parting hour,
The genius of Death shall come,
And whisper, knocking at the door,
"The dwelling of the shades awaits thee!"
E'en so, on winter eve sweet sleep
Frequents with joy the home of peace,
With lotos crowned, and lowly bent

On restful staff of languid ease

THE GRAVE OF A YOUTH

The world he fled,
Of love and pleasure once the nursling,
And is as one who lies in sleep.
Or cold of nameless tomb, forgot.

Time was, he loved our village games,
When as the girls beneath the shade
Of trees would loot the meadow free;-
But now in village song and dance
No more is heard his greeting light.

His elders had with envy marked
His easy gait and bearing gay,
And, smiling sadly, 'mongst themselves
Oft shook their hoary heads, and said:
"We too once loved the choral dance,
And shone as wits and jesters keen:
But wait: the years will make their round.
And thou shalt be what we are now.
Be taught by us, life's jocund guest,
The world to thee will soon prove cold:
Thou now mayst dance!".... The elders live,
Whilst he, in ripest bloom of youth,
Has, fading, perished ere his time.
Wild the feast, and loud the song-,
Although his voice is ever mute;
New friends now lill the vacant seat;
Seldom, seldom, when maidens chat,
And talk of love, his name is spoke;
Of all, whose hearts his words made flame,
It may be, one will shed a tear,
As memory recalls some scene
Of joy long buried in his grave —
And wherefore weep?

Bathed by a stream,
In calm array, the lines of tombs,
Each guarded by its wooden cross,
Lie hidden in the antique grove,
There, close beside the highroad's edge,
Where old beech-trees their branches wave,
His heart at peace and free from care,
Sleeps his last sleep the gentle youth.

In vain, the light of day pours down,
Or morn from mid-sky shines full bright,
Or, splashing round the senseless tomb,
The river purls, or forest wails;
In vain, at early morn, in quest
Of berries red, the village maid
Shall to the stream her basket bring,
And, frightened, dip her naked foot
Into the cold spring-waters fresh;
No sound can wake, or call him forth
The silent walls of his sad grave.

I HAVE OUTLIVED MY EVERY WISH

I have outlived my every wish,
Each dear dream seen rudely broken,
And naught remains but woe and plaint,
Sole heritage of vacant heart.

Despoiled by storms of jealous fate;
The tree of life has faded fast;
I live in grief and loneliness,
And wait in hope, the end may come.

As when the last, forgotten leaf,
That quivers on the naked branch,
By nipping frost is sudden caught,
And shriek of winter's storm is heard.

TO THE SEA

Farewell, thou free, all — conquering sea!
No more wilt thou before me roll
In endless flow thy dark-blue billows
And revel in thy beauty proud.

Like mournful voice of friend departing.
Like summons sad to bid adieu,
Thy murmur soft from region far
I hearken, but shall hear no more.
For thou hast been ray soul's desired bound,
As oft along thy pebbly shore
With slow and measured step I wandered,
And gladly lost in thoughts mine own.

How I have loved thy mystic echoes;
Dull sounds, a voice from the abyss;
In evening hour, thy peaceful ripple
Thy wayward bursts of sudden rage!

In fragile boat the fisher sailing
Thou lovst to shield from wave's caprice,
And safe it skims o'er surging breakers;
But with unconquered strength wilt rise,
And vessel proud to pieces dash.

Too long, a willing slave, I have served,
Removed from thee, a sordid world;
Too long forgot with song to greet thee,
And o'er thy crested waves to waft
My verse sonorous and sincere.

'Thou didst wait, thou didst call, but a spell
My vainly struggling soul subdued;
Enchanted by a mighty passion,
I still remained from thee estranged.

But why complain? Whither now should I
My vain and aimless steps direct?
O'er thy realms of waste but one small spot
Can speak to me or stir my soul:
A tiny rock, the glorious grave
And haunt of dreams of power lost,
Remembrance bare of fallen greatness,
Where raging pined Napoleon.

'T was there he died, slow torture's victim,
And now we mourn a loss as great:
For ever hushed the song of tempest,
That crowned him lord of soul of man.

He died bewept by freedom's children,
Bequeathing them his deathless crown.
Weep, ocean, weep, shed thy stormy tears!
His sweetest songs he sang to thee.

For on his brow was stamped thine image,
He, as it were, was child of thee;
Like thee, sublime, fathomless, alone;
Like thee, unconquered. unsubdued!

The world is dull and empty — And now,
Whither, ocean, wouldst thou bring me?
Where'er man flies, his fate ne'er changes;
And should he sip the cup of joy,
Some tyrant's hand will dash it down.

Once more, farewell! And I thy beauty
And charms sublime shall ne'er forget;
And long, long shall, trembling, hear at night
The echo of thy mighty roar.
To forest shade, or the silent plain,
I ne'er shall bring a thought, save thine;
See thy cliffs, thy gleam, thy yawning gulfs,
And hear the chatter of thy waves.

ELEGY

Beneath the deep-blue sky of her own native land,
She weary grew, and, drooping, pined away:
She died and passed, and over me I oft-times feel
Her youthful shadow fondly hovering;
And all the while a gaping chasm divides us both.
In vain I would my aching grief awake:
From tongue indifferent I heard the fatal news,
With ear indifferent I learned her death.
And yet, 'tis true, I loved her once with ardent soul,
My heart of hearts enwrapt in her alone;
With all the tenderness of languor torturing,
With all the racking pains of fond despair!
Where now my love, my pains? Alas, my barren soul
For her, so light and easy of belief,
For memory of days that nothing can recall,
To song or tears is dead and voiceless now.

VAIN GIFT, GIFT OF CHANCE

Vain gift, vain gift of blindest chance,
Life, why wert thou granted me?
Or why, by fate's supreme decree,
Wert thou foredoomed to sorrow?
Alas, what god's unfriendly power
Called me forth from nothingness,
My troubled soul with passion filled,
Made my mind a prey to doubt?

An aimless future lies before,
Dry my heart and void my mind.
My soul is dwarfed and crushed beneath
Life's dull riot monotone.

DROWNED

The children ran up to the cot,
And eager to the father cried:
“Daddie, daddie, come quick, our nets
A body dead to shore have dragged!”
“You lie, you lie, you little imps!”
The angry father roughly growled:
“To think that these my children are!
I’ll teach you talk about dead men.”

Stern as judge, he ‘gan to question;
“Alas, the truth I ne’er shall know,
There’s nothing to be done! Eh, wife,
Give here my cloak, for I must go.
Where is this corpse?” “There, father, there!”
In truth, upon the river bank,
Where they the fishing-nets had cast,
A dead man lay. upon the sand.
The corpse had lost its comely form,
All swollen now, of ghastly hue.
Some maddened wretch, who in despair
Had freed his erring soul from woe;
Some fisher caught in angry sea;
Some reeling royster homeward bound:
Or merchant rich, with well — filled purse,
Attacked by cunning thieves and robbed.

With this no peasant has concern!
He looks around, and sets to work;
With sleeves up-tucked, he quickly drags
To water’s edge the sodden corpse;
And with his oar it pushes off
Adown the open, flowing stream;
And with the tide the dead man floats
In search of grave with cross o’erhead.

And long the body, tossed by waves,
Rolled, floating, like a living thing;
The peasant watched it out of sight,
And then he thoughtful home returned:
“Now, brats, to none a word of this,
And wastel-loaf I’ll give to each;
But good heed take, and hold your tongues,
Or else a whipping you shall have!”

The night was rough, the storm-blast raged,
The river overflowed its banks;
Within the peasant's smoky hut
The flickering lath-torch spluttered;
The children slept, the housewife dozed.
And on his shelf the husband lay;
When, hark! above the tempest's howl
He heard some one at window knock.

"Who's there?".... Eh, open, my good friend
"Why, what ill luck is there abroad,
That thou, like Cain, dost prowl the night?
The devil take thee quick from hence!
For roaming vagrants where find place?
Our house is small and close enough."
And, with unwilling, lazy hand,
He window opened and looked out.

From out a cloud the moon peered forth...,
Before him stood a naked form,
With water dripping from his beard;
His eyes were open, motionless;
A lifeless statue, numb and cold,
His bony hands drooped helpless down;
And o'er his swollen body crawled,
Fast clinging, black and slimy things.

The peasant quick the window closed;
He knew full well that naked guest,
And swooned away. "Ah, mayst thou burst!"
He, trembling, muttered through his teeth.
Uncanny thoughts possessed his brain,
And all that night he sleepless tossed:
Till morn he heard the ceaseless knock,
At window first, and then at door.

Among the people goes the tale,
How from that night of dread and crime,
Each year the half-crazed peasant waits
The destined day and guest unknown.
From early morn the clouds hang low,
The night grows rough and wild with storm;
And lo! the dead man ceaseless knocks
At window first, and then at door.

THE UNWASHED

A poet from enchanted lyre
Struck notes of mildest melody;
He sang.... but cold and all unmoved,
The mob unconsecrated stood,
And, gaping, listened to his song.

Amongst themselves the mob discussed:
“Why sing with voice so musical?
The ear is tickled, but in vain,
What is the goal he leads us to?
Why this thrumming? What would he teach?
Our hearts why stir, our souls torment,
Like one possessed with unknown tongue?
His song is free as lawless winds,
And, like the winds, can bear no fruit:
What good or profit can it bring?

POET.

Silence! mob of senseless grumblers,
Day-labourers, base slaves of slaves,
I loathe your shallow murmurs vile.
Ye worms of earth, no sons of heaven,
Your God is profit:.... by the pound
You weigh Apollo Belvedere:
The iron pot is dearer held,
Since it serves well to cook your food.

THE UNWASHED.

Nay, if thou be elect of God,
Thy gift, dear messenger divine,
Use kindly for our good and weal;
Correct and guide thy brethren's hearts.
We are, thou sayst, small-souled in aim,
Wicked, shameless, and ungrateful;
Our hearts are cold and dead to love,
Calumniators, slaves, and fools;
Each vice finds nest within our souls.
But thou art lover of thy kind,
And lessons bold in truth canst give;
And we will listen to thy words.

POET.

Away! Begone! What common tie
Can poet bind to such as you?

Be boldly hard in vice as rock;
Nor song, nor lyre can give you life,
In soul as senseless as the tomb;
For centuries you have well reaped,
And of your follies won the prize,
The whip, the prison, and the axe.
Begone, dull slaves of ease and gain!
Men in your city's noisy streets
The rubbish sweep.... a useful work!
But think ye that the prophet-priests,
Forgetful of their calling high,
Will quit the altar-sacrifice,
And meekly take in hands your brooms?
To take part in the world's turmoil,
In sordid gain, in vulgar strife,
We are not born, but have received
The inspired gift of sweetest song.

A WINTER MORNING

The frost and sun; a glorious day!
And thou, my sweetling, still dost sleep:
'Tis time, my fairest, to awake:
Ope quick thine eyes with slumber dulled,
And gladly hail the Northern Morn,
Shine forth, thyself the Northern Star!

Last night the snow-storm whirled and roared,
The sky was hidden in white mist;
The yellow moon peered feebly through
The thick and gloomy flanks of cloud;
And thou satst dull and ill at ease,
But, darling, now.... look out abroad!

Beneath the richly woven web
Of dark-blue sky of deepest dye
The snow lies glittering in the sun:
The forest dense alone is black,
The firs are green with hoary rime,
And, bound in ice, the river gleams.

And all the room with amber glow
Is lighted up. The blazing fire
Up chimney flames with crackling gay,
'Tis good to muse in easy-chair:
But knowst thou what?' Tis better far
To harness quick the chestnut mare.

And o'er the morning's snow our steed,
Full eager, with impatience hot,
Shall, panting, bear us, dearest, quick;
Across the empty fields we'll scud
Through thickest forests none could pass,
Along the shore so dear to me.

THE NOISY JOYS OF THOUGHTLESS YEARS ARE SPENT

The noisy joys of thoughtless years are spent;
And all, like head confused with drink, is dulled.
But, as with wine, the woe of days gone by
With force more strong than newer woe torments.
A dreary path before me lies. Fresh toils
To drown me in a sea of trouble threat.

And yet, dear friends of youth. I would not die!
I wish to live, that I may muse and toil;
I feel that joy shall mingle with my woe,
Relieve my care, and heal my doubtings sad.
Once more, I'll drink the cup of harmony,
And drown my thoughts in flood of soothing tears;
And, haply, in the setting hour of life
Love's farewell smile 'shall lighten up the dark.

A STUDY

And now, my chubby critic, fat burly cynic,
For ever mocking and deriding my sad muse,
Draw near, and take a seat, I pray, close beside me,
And let us come to terms with this accursèd spleen.
But why that frown? Is it so hard to leave our woes,
A moment to forget ourselves in joyous song?
And now, admire the view! That sorry row of huts;
Behind, a level long descent of blackish earth,
Above, one layer thick of gray, unbroken clouds.
But where the cornfields gay or where the shady woods?
And where the river? In the court there, by the fence,
Shoot up two lean and withered trees to glad the eye;
Just two, no more; and one of them, you will observe,
By autumn rains has long been bared of its last leaf;
The scanty leaves upon the other only wait
I'he first loud breeze, to fall and foul the pond below.
No other sign of life, no dog to watch the yard.
But stay, Ivan I see, and two old women near;
With head unbared, the coffin of his child he bears,
And from afar to drowsy sexton loudly shouts,

And bids him call the priest, and church-door to unlock:
“Look sharp! The brat we should have buried long ago!”

TO THE CALUMNIATORS OF RUSSIA

What mean these angry cries, haranguers of the mob?
And wherefore hurl your curses at poor Russia's head?
And what has stirred your rage? Our Lietva's discontent?
Your wrangling cease, and let the Slavs arrange their feud:
It is an old domestic strife, the legacy
Of ages past, a quarrel you can ne'er decide.
Already long among themselves
These tribes have fought and weaved intrigues;
And more than once, as fate has willed,
We, or they, have bent before the storm.
But who shall victor end the feud,
The haughty Pole, or Russian true?
Shall streams Slavonic with Russian sea commingle,
Or leave it dry? That is the question.
Leave us in peace! You have not read
These sacred oracles of blood;
This fierce, domestic quarrel-feud
Seems to you both strange and senseless!
Kremlin, Praga, mean naught to you!
You mock and scorn as childish whim
The combat fierce we wage for life;
And more.... 'tis nothing new.... you hate us!
But why this hate? Na}r, answer, why?
Is it because, when burning Moscow's ruins flamed,
We would not own his brutal rule,
Before whose nod you, humbled, crouched?
Because we rose and dashed to ground
The idol that so long had weighed the empires down,
And boldly with our blood redeemed
Lost Europe's honour, freedom, peace?

Your threats are loud; now, try and prove as loud in deed!
Think ye, the aged hero, sleeping in his bed,
No more has strength to wield the sword of Ismail?
Or that the word of Russian Tsar has weaker grown?
Or have we ne'er with Europe warred,
And lost the victor's cunning skill?
Or are we few? Erom shores of Perm to southern
Tauris,
From Finnish cliffs of ice to fiery Colchis,
From Kremlin's battered battlements
As far as China's circling wall,
Not one shall fail his country's call!

Then send, assemblies of the West,
Your fiercest troops in full array!
In Russian plains we'll find them place
To sleep with those who fell before!

GOD GRANT, MY REASON NE'ER BETRAY ME

God grant, my reason ne'er betray me;
Nay, better, fever-waste or want.
Nay, better, toil and starve.

'Tis not that I my mind or wit
Have e'er prized high, or that with them
I were not glad to part.
If but my freedom were untouched,
With joy and gladness would I make
My home in forest dark.

With raving frenzy I should sing,
Myself forget, and lose my soul
In weird discordant dreams.

Strength uncontrolled would then be mine,
Like wildest storm that sweeps the fields,
And lays the forest bare.

Then I should hearken song of waves,
Be filled with joy, and gaze upon
The empty, vacant sky.

Ay, there's the rub: to lose my mind,
Be feared, as men do fear the plague,
And close in prison locked:

And when the madman's chained, in crowds
They'll come, and through the grating stare,
And tease the surly beast.

And then, at night, compelled to hear,
Instead of nightingale's high note,
Or forest's murmur soft,

The frantic shrieks of prison-mates,
Muttered oaths of warders sullen,
And creaking noise of chains.

THE TALISMAN

Where fierce the surge with awful bellow
Doth ever lash the rocky wall;
And where the moon most brightly mellow
Dost beam when mists of evening fall;
Where midst his harem's countless blisses
The Moslem spends his vital span,
A Sorceress there with gentle kisses
Presented me a Talisman.

And said: until thy latest minute
Preserve, preserve my Talisman;
A secret power it holds within it —
'Twas love, true love the gift did plan.
From pest on land, or death on ocean,
When hurricanes its surface fan,
O object of my fond devotion!
Thou scap'st not by my Talisman.

The gem in Eastern mine which slumbers,
Or ruddy gold 'twill not bestow;
'Twill not subdue the turban'd numbers,
Before the Prophet's shrine which bow;
Nor high through air on friendly pinions
Can bear thee swift to home and clan,
From mournful climes and strange dominions —
From South to North — my Talisman.

But oh! when crafty eyes thy reason
With sorceries sudden seek to move,
And when in Night's mysterious season
Lips cling to thine, but not in love —
From proving then, dear youth, a booty
To those who falsely would trepan
From new heart wounds, and lapse from duty,
Protect thee shall my Talisman.

THE MERMAID

Close by a lake, begirt with forest,
To save his soul, a Monk intent,
In fasting, prayer and labours sorest
His days and nights, secluded, spent;
A grave already to receive him
He fashion'd, stooping, with his spade,
And speedy, speedy death to give him,
Was all that of the Saints he pray'd.

As once in summer's time of beauty,
On bended knee, before his door,
To God he paid his fervent duty,
The woods grew more and more obscure:
Down o'er the lake a fog descended,
And slow the full moon, red as blood,
Midst threat'ning clouds up heaven wended —
Then gazed the Monk upon the flood.

He gaz'd, and, fear his mind surprising,
Himself no more the hermit knows:
He sees with foam the waters rising,
And then subsiding to repose,
And sudden, light as night-ghost wanders,
A female thence her form uprais'd,
Pale as the snow which winter squanders,
And on the bank herself she plac'd.

She gazes on the hermit hoary,
And combs her long hair, tress by tress;
The Monk he quakes, but on the glory
Looks wistful of her loveliness;
Now becks with hand that winsome creature,
And now she noddeth with her head,
Then sudden, like a fallen meteor,
She plunges in her watery bed.

No sleep that night the old man cheereth,
No prayer throughout next day he pray'd
Still, still, against his wish, appeareth
Before him that mysterious maid.
Darkness again the wood investeth,
The moon midst clouds is seen to sail,
And once more on the margin resteth
The maiden beautiful and pale.

With head she bow'd, with look she courted,
And kiss'd her hand repeatedly,
Splashed with the water, gaily sported,
And wept and laugh'd like infancy —
She names the monk, with tones heart-urging
Exclaims "O Monk, come, come to me!"
Then sudden midst the waters merging
All, all is in tranquillity.

On the third night the hermit fated
Beside those shores of sorcery,
Sat and the damsel fair awaited,
And dark the woods began to be —
The beams of morn the night mists scatter,
No Monk is seen then, well a day!
And only, only in the water
The lasses view'd his beard of grey.

ANCIENT RUSSIAN SONG

I.

The windel-straw nor grass so shook and trembled;
As the good and gallant stripling shook and trembled;
A linen shirt so fine his frame invested,
O'er the shirt was drawn a bright pelisse of scarlet
The sleeves of that pelisse depended backward,
The lappets of its front were button'd backward,
And were spotted with the blood of unbelievers;
See the good and gallant stripling reeling goeth,
From his eyeballs hot and briny tears distilling;
On his bended bow his figure he supporteth,
Till his bended bow has lost its goodly gilding;
Not a single soul the stripling good encounter'd,
Till encounter'd he the mother dear who bore him:
O my boy, O my treasure, and my darling!
By what mean hast thou render'd thee so drunken,
To the clay that thou bowest down thy figure,
And the grass and the windel-straws art grasping?
To his Mother thus the gallant youth made answer:
'Twas not I, O mother dear, who made me drunken,
But the Sultan of the Turks has made me drunken
With three potent, various potations;
The first of them his keenly cutting sabre;
The next of them his never failing jav'lin;
The third of them his pistol's leaden bullet.

II.

O rustle not, ye verdant oaken branches!
Whilst I tell the gallant stripling's tale of daring;
When this morn they led the gallant youth to judgment
Before the dread tribunal of the grand Tsar,
Then our Tsar and Gosudar began to question:
Tell me, tell me, little lad, and peasant bantling!
Who assisted thee to ravage and to plunder;
I trow thou hadst full many wicked comrades.
I'll tell thee, Tsar! our country's hope and glory,
I'll tell thee all the truth, without a falsehood:
Thou must know that I had comrades, four in number;
Of my comrades four the first was gloomy midnight;
The second was a steely dudgeon dagger;
The third it was a swift and speedy courser;

The fourth of my companions was a bent bow;
My messengers were furnace-harden'd arrows.
Replied the Tsar, our country's hope and glory:
Of a truth, thou little lad, and peasant's bantling!
In thieving thou art skill'd and giving answers;
For thy answers and thy thieving I'll reward thee
With a house upon the windy plain constructed
Of two pillars high, surmounted by a cross-beam.

III.

O thou field of my delight so fair and verdant!
Thou scene of all my happiness and pleasure!
O how charmingly Nature hath array'd thee
With the soft green grass and juicy clover,
And with corn-flowers blooming and luxuriant.
One thing there is alone, that doth deform thee;
In the midst of thee, O field, so fair and verdant!
A clump of bushes stands — a clump of hazels,
Upon their very top there sits an eagle,
And upon the bushes' top — upon the hazels,
Compress'd within his claw he holds a raven,
And its hot blood he sprinkles on the dry ground;
And beneath the bushes' clump — beneath the hazels,
Lies void of life the good and gallant stripling;
All wounded, pierc'd and mangled is his body.
As the little tiny swallow or the chaffinch,
Round their warm and cosey nest are seen to hover,
So hovers there the mother dear who bore him;
And aye she weeps, as flows a river's water;
His sister weeps as flows a streamlet's water;
His youthful wife, as falls the dew from heaven —
The Sun, arising, dries the dew of heaven.

Poems Translated by Ivan Panin

POEMS AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL

MON PORTRAIT

Vous me demandez mon portrait,
Mais peint d'après nature:
Mon cher, il sera bientôt fait,
Quoique en miniature.

Je sais un jeune polisson
Encore dans les classes:
Point sot, je le dis sans façon
Et sans fades grimaces.

Onc, il ne fut de babillard,
Ni docteur de Sorbonne
Plus ennuyeux et plus braillard
Que moi-même en personne.

Ma taille à celle des plus longs
Los n'est point égalée;
J'ai le teint frais, les cheveux blonds,
Et la tête bouclée.

J'aime et le monde, et son fracas,
Je hais la solitude;
J'abhorre et noises et débats,
Et tant soit peu l'étude.

Spectacles, bals me plaisent fort,
Et d'après ma pensée
Je dirais ce que j'aime encore,
Si je n'étais au lycée.

Après cela, mon cher ami,
L'on peut me reconnaître:
Oui! tel que le bon Dieu me fit,
Je veux toujours paraître.
Vrai démon pour l'espièglerie,

Vrai singe par sa mine,
Beaucoup et trop d'étourderie, —
Ma foi — voilà Poushkine.

MY PEDIGREE

WITH scorning laughter at a fellow writer,
In a chorus the Russian scribes
With name of aristocrat me chide:
Just look, if please you... nonsense what!
Court Coachman not I, nor assessor,
Nor am I nobleman by cross;
No academician, nor professor,
I'm simply of Russia a citizen.

Well I know the times' corruption,
And, surely, not gainsay it shall I:
Our nobility but recent is:
The more recent it, the more noble 't is.
But of humbled races a chip,
And, God be thanked, not alone
Of ancient Lords am scion I;
Citizen I am, a citizen!

Not in cakes my grandsire traded,
Not a prince was newly-baked he;
Nor at church sang he in choir,
Nor polished he the boots of Tsar;
Was not escaped a soldier he
From the German powdered ranks;
How then aristocrat am I to be?
God be thanked, I am but a citizen.

My grandsire Radsha in warlike service
To Alexander Nefsky was attached.
The Crowned Wrathful, Fourth Ivan,
His descendants in his ire had spared.
About the Tsars the Pushkins moved;
And more than one acquired renown,
When against the Poles battling was
Of Nizhny Novgorod the citizen plain.

When treason conquered was and falsehood,
And the rage of storm of war,
When the Romanoffs upon the throne
The nation called by its Chart —
We upon it laid our hands;
The martyr's son then favored us;
Time was, our race was prized,
But I... am but a citizen obscure.

Our stubborn spirit us tricks has played;
Most irrepressible of his race,
With Peter my sire could not get on;
And for this was hung by him.
Let his example a lesson be:
Not contradiction loves a ruler,
Not all can be Prince Dolgorukys,
Happy only is the simple citizen.

My grandfather, when the rebels rose
In the palace of Peterhof,
Like Munich, faithful he remained
To the fallen Peter Third;
To honor came then the Orloffs,
But my sire into fortress, prison —
Quiet now was our stem race,
And I was born merely — citizen.

Beneath my crested seal
The roll of family charts I've kept;
Not running after magnates new,
My pride of blood I have subdued;
I'm but an unknown singer
Simply Pushkin, not Moussin,
My strength is mine, not from court:
I am a writer, a citizen.

1830.

MY MONUMENT

A MONUMENT not hand-made I have for me erected;
The path to it well-trodden will not overgrow;
Risen higher has it with unbending head
Than the monument of Alexander.

No! not all of me shall die! my soul in hallowed lyre
Shall my dust survive, and escape destruction —
And famous be I shall, as long as on earth sublunar
One bard at least living shall remain.

My name will travel over the whole of Russia great,
And there pronounce my name shall every living tongue:
The Slav's proud scion, and the Finn, and the savage yet
Tungus, and the Calmuck, lover of the steppe.

And long to the nation I shall be dear:
For rousing with my lyre its noble feelings,
For extolling freedom in a cruel age,
For calling mercy upon the fallen.

The bidding of God, O Muse, obey.
Fear not insult, ask not crown:
Praise and blame take with indifference
And dispute not with the fool!

August, 1836.

MY MUSE

IN the days of my youth she was fond of me,
And the seven-stemmed flute she handed me.
To me with smile she listened; and already gently
Along the openings echoing of the woods
Was playing I with fingers tender:
Both hymns solemn, god-inspired
And peaceful song of Phrygian shepherd.
From morn till night in oak's dumb shadow
To the strange maid's teaching intent I listened;
And with sparing reward me gladdening
Tossing back her curls from her forehead dear,
From my hands the flute herself she took.
Now filled the wood was with breath divine
And the heart with holy enchantment filled.

1823.

POEMS OF LOVE

THE STORM-MAID

HAST thou seen on the rock the maid,
In robe of white above the waves,
When seething in the storm dark
Played the sea with its shores, —
When the glare of lightning hourly
With rosy glimmer her lighted up,
And the wind beating and flapping
Struggled with her flying robe?

Beautiful's the sea in the storm dark,
Glorious is the sky even without its blue;
But trust me: on the rock the maid
Excels both wave, and sky, and storm.

1825.

THE BARD

HAVE ye beard in the woods the nightly voice
Of the bard of love, of the bard of his grief?
When the fields in the morning hour were still,
The flute's sad sound and simple
Have ye heard?

Have ye met in the desert darkness of the forest
The bard of love, the bard of his grief?
Was it a track of tears, was it a smile,
Or a quiet glance filled with melancholy,
Have ye met?

Have ye sighed, listening to the calm voice
Of the bard of love, of the bard of grief?
When in the woods the youth ye saw
And met the glance of his dulled eyes,
Have ye sighed?

SPANISH LOVE-SONG

EVENING Zephyr
Waves the ether.
Murmurs,
Rushes
The Guadalquivir.

Now the golden moon has risen,
Quiet,... Tshoo... guitar's now heard....
Now the Spanish girl young
O'er the balcony has leaned.

Evening Zephyr
Waves the ether.
Murmurs,
Rushes
The Guadalquivir.

Drop thy mantle, angel gentle,
And appear as fair as day!
Thro' the iron balustrade
Put thy wondrous tender foot!
Evening Zephyr
Waves the ether.
Murmurs,
Rushes
The Guadalquivir.

1824.

LOVE

BITTERLY groaning, jealous maid the youth was scolding;
He, on her shoulder leaning, suddenly was in slumber lost.
Silent forthwith is the maid; his light sleep now fondles she
Now she smiles upon him, and is shedding gentle tears.

JEALOUSY

DAMP day's light is quenched: damp night's darkness
Stretches over the sky its leaden garment.
Like a ghost, from behind the pine wood
Foggy moon has risen....
— All brings upon my soul darkness grievous.
Far, far away rises the shining moon,
There the earth is filled with evening warmth
There the sea moveth with luxuriant wave
Under the heavens blue....
Now is the time. On the hillside now she walks
To the shore washed by noisy waves.
There, under the billowed cliffs
Alone she sits now melancholy....
Alone... none before her weeping, grieves not,
Her knees none kisses in ecstasy.
Alone... to lips of none she is yielding
Her shoulders, nor moist lips, nor snow-white fingers.

None is worthy of her heavenly love.
Is it not so? Thou art alone.... Thou weapest....
And I at peace? —
But if —

IN AN ALBUM

THE name of me, what is it to thee
Die it shall like the grievous sound
Of wave, playing on distant shore,
As sound of night in forest dark.

Upon the sheet of memory
Its traces dead leave it shall
Inscriptions-like of grave-yard
In some foreign tongue.

What is in it? Long ago forgotten
In tumultuous waves and fresh
To thy soul not give it shall
Pure memories and tender.

But on sad days, in calmness
Do pronounce it sadly;
Say then: I do remember thee —

1829.

THE AWAKING

On earth one heart is where yet I live!
YE dreams, ye dreams,
Where is your sweetness?
Where thou, where thou
O — joy of night?
Disappeared has it,
The joyous dream;
And solitary
In darkness deep
I awaken.
Round my bed
Is silent night.
At once are cooled,
At once are fled,
All in a crowd
The dreams of Love —
Still with longing
The soul is filled
And grasps of sleep
The memory.
O — Love, O Love,
O — hear my prayer:
Again send me
Those visions thine,
And on the morrow
Raptured anew
Let me die
Without awaking!

ELEGY: HAPPY WHO TO HIMSELF CONFESS

HAPPY who to himself confess
His passion dares without terror;
Happy who in fate uncertain
By modest hope is fondled;
Happy who by foggy moonbeams
Is led to midnight joyful
And with faithful key who gently
The door unlocks of his beloved.

But for me in sad my life
No joy there is of secret pleasure;
Hope's early flower faded is,
By struggle withered is life's flower.
Youth away flies melancholy,
And droop with me life's roses;
But by Love tho' long forgot,
Forget Love's tears I cannot.

FIRST LOVE

NOT at once our youth is faded,
Not at once our joys forsake us,
And happiness we unexpected
Yet embrace shall more than once;
But ye, impressions never-dying
Of newly trepidating Love,
And thou, first flame of Intoxication,
Not flying back are coming ye!

ELEGY: HUSHED I SOON SHALL BE

HUSHED I soon shall be. But if on sorrow's day
My songs to me with pensive play replied;
But if the youths to me, in silence listening
At my love's long torture were marvelling;
But if thou thyself, to tenderness yielding
Repeated in quiet my melancholy verses
And didst love my heart's passionate language;
But if I am loved: — grant then, O dearest friend,
That my beautiful beloved's coveted name
Breathe life into my lyre's farewell.
When for aye embraced I am by sleep of Death,
Over my urn do with tenderness pronounce:
"By me he loved was, to me he owed
Of his love and song his last inspiration."

THE BURNT LETTER

GOOD-BYE, love-letter, good-bye! 'T is her command....
How long I waited, how long my hand
To the fire my joys to yield was loath!...
But eno', the hour has come: bum, letter of my love!
I am ready: listens more my soul to nought.
Now the greedy flame thy sheets shall lick...
A minute!... they crackle, they blaze... a light smoke
Curls and is lost with prayer mine.
Now the finger's faithful imprint losing
Bums the melted wax.... O Heavens!
Done it is! curled in are the dark sheets;
Upon their ashes light the lines adored
Are gleaming.... My breast is heavy. Ashes dear,
In my sorrowful lot but poor consolation,
Remain for aye with me on my weary breast....

1825.

SING NOT, BEAUTY

SING not, Beauty, in my presence,
Of Transcaucasia sad the songs,
Of distant shore, another life,
The memory to me they bring.

Alas, alas, remind they do,
These cruel strains of thine,
Of steppes, and night, and of the moon
And of distant, poor maid's features.

The vision loved, tender, fated,
Forget can I, when thee I see
But when thou singest, then before me
Up again it rises.

Sing not, Beauty, in my presence
Of Transcaucasia sad the songs,
Of distant shore, another life
The memory to me they bring.

SIGNS

To thee I rode: living dreams then
Behind me winding in playful crowd;
My sportive trot my shoulder over
The moon upon my right was chasing.

From thee I rode: other dreams now.
My loving soul now sad was,
And the moon at left my side
Companion mine now sad was.

To dreaming thus in quiet ever
Singers we are given over;
Marks thus of superstition
Soul's feeling with are in accord!

A PRESENTIMENT

THE clouds again are o'er me,
Have gathered in the stillness;
Again me with misfortune
Envious fate now threatens.
Will I keep my defiance?
Will I bring against her
The firmness and patience
Of my youthful pride?

Wearied by a stormy life
I await the storm fretless
Perhaps once more safe again
A harbor shall I find....
But I feel the parting nigh,
Unavoidable, fearful hour,
To press thy hand for the last time,
I haste to thee, my angel.
Angel gentle, angel calm,
Gently tell me: fare thee well.

Be thou grieved: thy tender gaze
Either drop or to me raise.
The memory of thee now shall
To my soul replace
The strength, the pride and the hope,
The daring of my former days!

IN VAIN, DEAR FRIEND

IN vain, dear friend, to conceal I tried
The turmoil cold of my grieving soul;
Now me thou knowest; goes by the intoxication.
And no longer thee I love....
Vanished for aye the bewitching hours,
The beautiful time has passed,
Youthful desires extinguished are
And lifeless hope is in my heart....

LOVE'S DEBT

FOR the shores of thy distant home
Thou hast forsaken the foreign land;
In a memorable, sad hour
I — before thee cried long.
Tho' cold my hands were growing
Thee back to hold they tried;
And begged of thee my parting groan
The gnawing weariness not to break.

But from my bitter kisses thou
Thy lips away hast torn;
From the land of exile dreary
Calling me to another land.
Thou saidst: on the day of meeting
Beneath a sky forever blue
Olives' shade beneath, love's kisses
Again, my friend, we shall unite.

But where, alas! the vaults of sky
Shining are with glimmer blue,
Where 'neath the rocks the waters slumber —
With last sleep art sleeping thou.
And beauty thine and sufferings
In the urnal grave have disappeared —
But the kiss of meeting is also gone....
But still I wait: thou art my debtor!....

INVOCATION

OH, if true it is that by night
When resting are the living
And from the sky the rays of moon
Along the stones of church-yard glide;
O, if true it is that emptied then
Are the quiet graves,
I — call thy shade, I wait my Lila
Come hither, come hither, my friend, to me!

Appear, O shade of my beloved
As thou before our parting wert:
Pale, cold, like a wintry day
Disfigured by thy struggle of death,
Come like unto a distant star,
Or like a fearful apparition,
'T is all the same: Come hither, come hither

And I call thee, not in order
To reproach him whose wickedness
My friend hath slain.
Nor to fathom the grave's mysteries,
Nor because at times I'm worn
With gnawing doubt... but I sadly
Wish to say that still I love thee,
That wholly thine I am: hither come, O hither!

ELEGY: THE EXTINGUISHED JOY OF CRAZY YEARS

THE extinguished joy of crazy years
On me rests heavy, like dull debauch.
But of by-gone days the grief, like wine
In my soul the older, the stronger 't grows.
Dark my path. Toil and pain promised are me
By the Future's roughened sea.
But not Death, O friends, I wish!
But Life I wish: to think and suffer;
Well I know, for me are joys in store
'Mid struggles, toils, and sorrows:
Yet' gain at times shall harmony drink in
And tears I'll shed over Fancy's fruit, —
Yet mayhap at my saddened sunset
Love will beam with farewell and smile.

1830.

SORROW

ASK not why with sad reflection
‘Mid gayety I oft am darkened,
Why ever cheerless eyes I raise,
Why sweet life’s dream not dear to me is;
Ask not why with frigid soul
I — joyous love no longer crave,
And longer none I call dear:
Who once has loved, not again can love;
Who bliss has known, ne’er again shall know;
For one brief moment to us ‘t is given:
Of youth, of joy, of tenderness
Is left alone the sadness.

1817.

DESPAIR

DEAR my friend, we are now parted,
My soul's asleep; I grieve in silence.
Gleams the day behind the mountain blue,
Or rises the night with moon autumnal, —
Still thee I seek, my far off friend,
Thee alone remember I everywhere,
Thee alone in restless sleep I see.
Pauses my mind, unwittingly thee I call;
Listens mine ear, then thy voice I hear.

And thou my lyre, my despair dost share,
Of sick my soul companion thou!
Hollow is and sad the sound of thy string,
Grief's sound alone hast not forgot....
Faithful lyre, with me grieve thou!
Let thine easy note and careless
Sing of love mine and despair,
And while listening to thy singing
May thoughtfully the maidens sigh!

A WISH

SLOWLY my days are dragging
And in my faded heart each moment doubles
All the sorrows of hopeless love
And heavy craze upsets me.
But I am silent. Heard not is my murmur.
Tears I shed... they are my consolation;
My soul in sorrow steeped
Finds enjoyment bitter in them.
O — flee, life's dream, thee not regret I!
In darkness vanish, empty vision I
Dear to me is of love my pain,
Let me die, but let me die still loving!

1816.

RESIGNED LOVE

THEE I loved; not yet love perhaps is
In my heart entirely quenched
But trouble let it thee no more;
Thee to grieve with nought I wish.
Silent, hopeless thee I loved,
By fear tormented, now by jealousy;
So sincere my love, so tender,
May God the like thee grant from another.

LOVE AND FREEDOM

CHILD of Nature and simple,
Thus to sing was wont I
Sweet the dream of freedom —
With tenderness my breast it filled.

But thee I see, thee I hear —
And now? Weak become I.
With freedom lost forever
With all my heart I bondage prize.

NOT AT ALL

I THOUGHT forgotten has the heart
Of suffering the easy art;
Not again can be, said I
Not again what once has been.

Of Love the sorrows gone were,
Now calm were my airy dreams....
But behold! again they tremble
Beauty's mighty power before!...

INSPIRING LOVE

THE moment wondrous I remember
Thou before me didst appear
Like a flashing apparition,
Like a spirit of beauty pure.

‘Mid sorrows of hopeless grief,
‘Mid tumults of noiseful bustle,
Rang long to me thy tender voice,
Came dreams to me of thy lovely features.

Went by the years. The storm’s rebellious rush
The former dreams had scattered
And I forgot thy tender voice,
I — forgot thy heavenly features.

In the desert, in prison’s darkness,
Quietly my days were dragging;
No reverence, nor inspiration,
Nor tears, nor life, nor love.
But at last awakes my soul:
And again didst thou appear:
Like a flashing apparition,
Like a spirit of beauty pure.

And enraptured beats my heart,
And risen are for it again
Both reverence, and inspiration
And life, and tears, and love.

THE GRACES

Till now no faith I had in Graces:
Seemed strange to me their triple sight;
Thee I see, and with faith am filled
Adoring now in one the three!

POEMS MISCELLANEOUS

THE BIRDLET

IN exile I sacredly observe
The custom of my fatherland:
I freedom to a birdlet give
On Spring's holiday serene.
And now I too have consolation:
Wherefore murmur against my God
When at least to one living being
I could of freedom make a gift?

1823.

THE NIGHTINGALE

IN silent gardens, in the spring, in the darkness of the night
Sings above the rose from the east the nightingale;
But dear rose neither feeling has, nor listens it,
But under its lover's hymn waveth it and slumbers.

Dost thou not sing thus to beauty cold?
Reflect, O bard, whither art thou striding?
She neither listens, nor the bard she feels.
Thou gazest? Bloom she does; thou callest? —
Answer none she gives!

1827.

THE FLOWERET

A FLOWERET, withered, odorless
In a book forgot I find;
And already strange reflection
Cometh into my mind.

Bloomed, where? when? In what spring?
And how long ago? And plucked by whom?
Was it by a strange hand? Was it by a dear hand?
And wherefore left thus here?

Was it in memory of a tender meeting?
Was it in memory of a fated parting?
Was it in memory of a lonely walk?
In the peaceful fields or in the shady woods?

Lives he still? Lives she still?
And where their nook this very day?
Or are they too withered
Like unto this unknown floweret?

1828.

THE HORSE

Why dost thou neigh, O spirited steed,
Why thy neck so low,
Why thy mane unshaken
Why thy bit not gnawed?
Do I then not fondle thee?
Thy grain to eat art thou not free?
Is not thy harness ornamented,
Is not thy rein of silk,
Is not thy shoe of silver,
Thy stirrup not of gold?

The steed in sorrow answer gives:
Hence am I quiet
Because the distant tramp I hear,
The trumpet's blow and the arrow's whizz
And hence I neigh, since in the field
No longer feed I shall,
Nor in beauty live and fondling,
Neither shine with harness bright.
For soon the stem enemy
My harness whole shall take
And the shoes of silver
Tear he shall from feet mine light.
Hence it is that grieves my spirit:
That in place of my chaprak
With thy skin shall cover he
My perspiring sides.

TO A BABE

CHILD, I dare not over thee
Pronounce a blessing;
Thou art of consolation a quiet angel
May then happy be thy lot...

THE POET

ERE the poet summoned is
To Apollo's holy sacrifice
In the world's empty cares
Engrossed is half-hearted he.

His holy lyre silent is
And cold sleep his soul locks in;
And of the world's puny children,
Of all puniest perhaps is he.

Yet no sooner the heavenly word
His keen ear hath reached,
Than up trembles the singer's soul
Like unto an awakened eagle.

The world's pastimes him now weary
And mortals' gossip now he shuns
To the feet of popular idol
His lofty head bends not he.
Wild and stem, rushes he,
Of tumult full and sound,
To the shores of desert wave,
Into the widely-whispering wood.

SONNET: POET, NOT POPULAR APPLAUSE SHALT THOU PRIZE!

POET, not popular applause shalt thou prize!
Of raptured praise shall pass the momentary noise;
The fool's judgment hear thou shalt, and the cold mob's laughter —
Calm stand, and firm be, and — sober!

Thou art king: live alone. On the free road
Walk, whither draws thee thy spirit free:
Ever the fruits of beloved thoughts ripening,
Never reward for noble deeds demanding.

In thyself reward seek. Thine own highest court thou art;
Severest judge, thine own works canst measure.
Art thou content, O fastidious craftsman?
Content? Then let the mob scold,
And spit upon the altar, where blazes thy fire.
Thy tripod in childlike playfulness let it shake.

THE THREE SPRINGS

IN the world's desert, sombre and shoreless
Mysteriously three springs have broken thro':
Of youth the spring, a boisterous spring and rapid;
It boils, it runs, it sparkles, and it murmurs.
The Castalian Spring, with wave of inspiration
In the world's deserts its exiles waters;
The last spring — the cold spring of forgetfulness,
Of all sweetest, quench it does the heart's fire.

1827.

THE TASK

THE longed-for moment here is. Ended is my long-yearred task.
Why then sadness strange me troubles secretly?
My task done, like needless hireling am I to stand,
My wage in hand, to other task a stranger?
Or my task regret I, of night companion silent mine,
Gold Aurora's friend, the friend of my sacred household gods?

1830.

SLEEPLESSNESS

I CANNOT sleep, I have no light;
Darkness 'bout me, and sleep is slow;
The beat monotonous alone
Near me of the clock is heard.
Of the Fates the womanish babble,
Of sleeping night the trembling,
Of life the mice-like running-about, —
Why disturbing me art thou?
What art thou, O tedious whisper?
The reproaches, or the murmur
Of the day by me misspent?
What from me wilt thou have?
Art thou calling or prophesying?
Thee I wish to understand,
Thy tongue obscure I study now.

1830.

QUESTIONINGS

USELESS gift, accidental gift,
Life, why given art thou me?
Or, why by fate mysterious
To torture art thou doomed?

Who with hostile power me
Out has called from the nought?
Who my soul with passion thrilled,
Who my spirit with doubt has filled?...

Goal before me there is none,
My heart is hollow, vain my mind
And with sadness wearies me
Noisy life's monotony.

1828.

CONSOLATION

LIFE, — does it disappoint thee?
Grieve not, nor be angry thou!
In days of sorrow gentle be:
Come shall, believe, the joyful day.

In the future lives the heart:
Is the present sad indeed?
'T is but a moment, all will pass;
Once in the past, it shall be dear.

1825.

FRIENDSHIP

THUS it ever was and ever will be,
Such of old is the world wide:
The learned are many, the sages few,
Acquaintance many, but not a friend!

FAME

BLESSED who to himself has kept
His creation highest of the soul,
And from his fellows as from the graves
Expected not appreciation!
Blessed he who in silence sang
And the crown of fame not wearing,
By mob despised and forgotten,
Forsaken nameless has the world!
Deceiver greater than dreams of hope,
What is fame? The adorer's whisper?
Or the boor's persecution?
Or the rapture of the fool?
AT the gates of Eden a tender angel
With drooping head was shining;
A demon gloomy and rebellious
Over hell's abyss was flying.

The Spirit of Denial, the Spirit of Doubt
The Spirit of Purity espied;
And a tender warmth unwittingly
Now first to know it learned he.

Adieu, he spake, thee I saw:
Not in vain hast thou shone before me;
Not all in the world have I hated,
Not all in the world have I scorned.

HOME-SICKNESS

MAYHAP not long am destined I
In exile peaceful to remain,
Of dear days of yore to sigh,
And rustic muse in quiet
With spirit calm to follow.

But even far, in foreign land,
In thought forever roam I shall
Around Trimountain mine:
By meadows, river, by its hills,
By garden, linden nigh the house.

Thus when darkens day the clear,
Alone from depths of grave,
Spirit home-longing
Into the native hall flies
To espy the loved ones with tender glance.

1825.

INSANITY

GOD grant I grow not insane:
No, better the stick and beggar's bag;
No, better toil and hunger bear.

Not that I upon my reason
Such value place; not that I
Would fain not lose it.

If freedom to me they would leave
How I would lasciviously
For the gloomy forest rush!

In hot delirium I would sing
And unconscious would remain
With ravings wondrous and chaotic.

And listen would I to the waves
And gaze I would full of bliss
Into the empty heavens.

And free and strong then would I be
Like a storm the fields updigging,
Forest-trees uprooting.

But here's the trouble: if crazy once,
A fright thou art like pestilence,
And locked up now shalt thou be.

To a chain thee, fool, they'll fasten
And through the gate, a circus beast,
Thee to nettle the people come.

And at night not hear shall I
Clear the voice of nightingale
Nor the forest's hollow sound,

But cries alone of companions mine
And the scolding guards of night
And a whizzing, of chains a ringing.

DEATH-THOUGHTS

WHETHER I roam along the noisy streets
Whether I enter the peopled temple,
Whether I sit by thoughtless youth,
Haunt my thoughts me everywhere.

I — say, Swiftly go the years by:
However great our number now,
Must all descend the eternal vaults, —
Already struck has some one's hour.

And if I gaze upon the lonely oak
I — think: the patriarch of the woods
Will survive my passing age
As he survived my father's age.

And if a tender babe I fondle
Already I mutter, Fare thee well!
I — yield my place to thee. For me
'T is time to decay, to bloom for thee
Every year thus, every day
With death my thought I join
Of coming death the day
I seek among them to divine.

Where will Fortune send me death?
In battle? In wanderings, or on the waves?
Or shall the valley neighboring
Receive my chilled dust?

But tho' the unfeeling body
Can everywhere alike decay,
Still I, my birthland nigh
Would have my body lie.

Let near the entrance to my grave
Cheerful youth be in play engaged,
And let indifferent creation
With beauty shine there eternally.

RIGHTS

NOT dear I prize high-sounding rights
By which is turned more head than one;
Not murmur I that not granted the Gods to me
The blessed lot of discussing fates,
Of hindering kings from fighting one another;
And little care I whether free the press is.

All this you see are *words, words, words*
Other, better rights, dear to me are;
Other, better freedom is my need....
To depend on rulers, or the mob —
Is not all the same it? God be with them!
To give account to none; to thyself alone
To serve and please; for power, for a livery
Nor soul, nor mind, nor neck to bend:
Now here, now there to roam in freedom
Nature's beauties divine admiring,
And before creations of art and inspiration
Melt silently in tender ecstasy —
This is bliss, these are rights!...

THE GYPSIES

OVER the wooded banks,
In the hour of evening quiet,
Under the tents are song and bustle
And the fires are scattered.

Thee I greet, O happy race!
I recognize thy blazes,
I — myself at other times
These tents would have followed.

With the early rays to-morrow
Shall disappear your freedom's trace,
Go you will — but not with you
Longer go shall the bard of you.

He alas, the changing lodgings,
And the pranks of days of yore
Has forgot for rural comforts
And for the quiet of a home.

THE DELIBASH

CROSS-FIRING behind the hills:
Both camps watch, theirs and ours;
In front of Cossaks on the hill
Dashes 'long brave Delibash

O Delibash, not to the line come nigh,
Do have mercy on thy life;
Quick 't is over with thy frolic bold,
Pierced thou by the spear shalt be

Hey, Cossak, not to battle rush
The Delibash is swift as wind;
Cut he will with crooked sabre
From thy shoulders thy fearless head.

They rush with yell: are hand to hand;
And behold now what each befalls:
Already speared the Delibash is
Already headless the Cossak is!

HYMN TO FORCE

I am eternal!
I throb through the ages;
I am the Master
Of each of Life's stages.

I quicken the blood
Of the mate-craving lover;
The age-frozen heart
With daisies I cover.

Down through the ether
I hurl constellations;
Up from their earth-bed
I wake the carnations.

I laugh in the flame
As I kindle and fan it;
I crawl in the worm;
I leap in the planet.

Forth from its cradle
I pilot the river;
In lightning and earthquake
I flash and I quiver.

My breath is the wind;
My bosom the ocean;
My form's undefined;
My essence is motion.

The braggarts of science
Would weigh and divide me;
Their wisdom evading,
I vanish and hide me.

My glances are rays
From stars emanating;
My voice through the spheres
Is sound, undulating.

I am the monarch
Uniting all matter:
The atoms I gather;
The atoms I scatter.

I pulse with the tides —
Now hither, now thither;
I grant the tree sap;
I bid the bud wither.

I always am present,
Yet nothing can bind me;
Like thought evanescent,
They lose me who find me.

THE BLACK SHAWL

I gaze demented on the black shawl,
And my cold soul is torn by grief.

When young I was and full of trust
I passionately loved a young Greek girl.

The charming maid, she fondled me,
But soon I lived the black day to see.

Once as were gathered my jolly guests,
A detested Jew knocked at my door.

Thou art feasting, he whispered, with friends,
But betrayed thou art by thy Greek maid.

Moneys I gave him and curses,
And called my servant, the faithful.

We went; I flew on the wings of my steed,
And tender mercy was silent in me.

Her threshold no sooner I espied,
Dark grew my eyes, and my strength departed.

The distant chamber I enter alone —
An Armenian embraces my faithless maid.

Darkness around me: flashed the dagger;
To interrupt his kiss the wretch had no time.

And long I trampled the headless corpse, —
And silent and pale at the maid I stared.

I remember her prayers, her flowing blood,
But perished the girl, and with her my love.

The shawl I took from the head now dead,
And wiped in silence the bleeding steel.

When came the darkness of eve, my serf
Threw their bodies into the billows of the Danube.

Since then I kiss no charming eyes,
Since then I know no cheerful days.

I gaze demented on the black shawl,
And my cold soul is torn by grief.

THE OUTCAST

On a rainy autumn evening
Into desert places went a maid;
And the secret fruit of unhappy love
In her trembling hands she held.
All was still: the woods and the hills
Asleep in the darkness of the night;
And her searching glances
In terror about she cast.

And on this babe, the innocent,
Her glance she paused with a sigh:
"Asleep thou art, my child, my grief,
Thou knowest not my sadness.
Thine eyes will ope, and though with longing,
To my breast shalt no more cling.
No kiss for thee to-morrow
From thine unhappy mother.

Beckon in vain for her thou wilt,
My everlasting shame, my guilt!
Me forget thou shalt for aye,
But thee forget shall not I;
Shelter thou shalt receive from strangers;
Who'll say: Thou art none of ours!
Thou wilt ask: Where are my parents?
But for thee no kin is found.

Hapless one! with heart filled with sorrow,
Lonely amid thy mates,
Thy spirit sullen to the end
Thou shalt behold the fondling mothers.
A lonely wanderer everywhere,
Cursing thy fate at all times,
Thou the bitter reproach shalt hear ...
Forgive me, oh, forgive me then!

Asleep! let me then, O hapless one,
To my bosom press thee once for all;
A law unjust and terrible
Thee and me to sorrow dooms.
While the years have not yet chased
The guiltless joy of thy days,
Sleep, my darling; let no bitter griefs
Mar thy childhood's quiet life!"

But lo, behind the woods, near by,
The moon brings a hut to light.
Forlorn, pale, trembling
To the doors she came nigh;
She stooped, and gently laid down
The babe on the strange threshold.
In terror away she turned her eyes
And disappeared in the darkness of the night.

THE CLOUD

O last cloud of the scattered storm,
Alone thou sailest along the azure clear;
Alone thou bringest the darkness of shadow;
Alone thou marrest the joy of the day.

Thou but recently hadst encircled the sky,
When sternly the lightning was winding about thee.
Thou gavest forth mysterious thunder,
Thou hast watered with rain the parched earth.

Enough; hie thyself. Thy time hath passed.
The earth is refreshed, and the storm hath fled,
And the breeze, fondling the leaves of the trees,
Forth chases thee from the quieted heavens.

THE ANGEL

At the gates of Eden a tender Angel
With drooping head was shining;
A demon gloomy and rebellious
Over the abyss of hell was flying.

The spirit of Denial, the spirit of Doubt,
The spirit of purity espied;
And unwittingly the warmth of tenderness
He for the first time learned to know.

Adieu, he spake. Thee I saw;
Not in vain hast thou shone before me.
Not all in the world have I hated,
Not all in the world have I scorned.

THE PROPHET

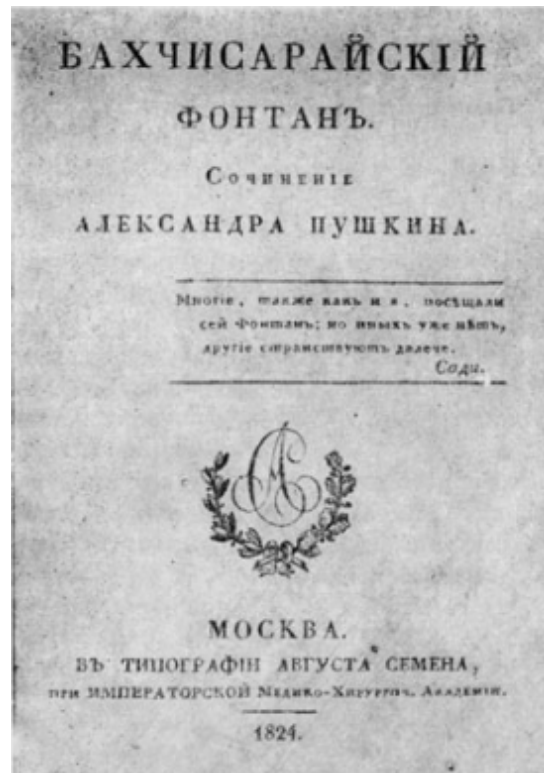
Tormented by the thirst for the Spirit,
I was dragging myself in a sombre desert,
And a six-winged seraph appeared
Unto me on the parting of the roads;
With fingers as light as a dream
He touched mine eyes;
And mine eyes opened wise,
Like unto the eyes of a frightened eagle.
He touched mine ears,
And they filled with din and ringing.
And I heard the trembling of the heavens,
And the flight of the angels' wings,
And the creeping of the polyps in the sea,
And the growth of the vine in the valley.
And he took hold of my lips,
And out he tore my sinful tongue,
With its empty and false speech.
And the fang of the wise serpent
Between my terrified lips he placed
With bloody hand.
And ope he cut my breast with a sword,
And out he took my trembling heart,
And a coal blazing with flame
He shoved into the open breast.
Like a corpse I lay in the desert;
And the voice of the Lord called unto me:
"Arise! O prophet and guide, and listen, —
Be thou filled with my will,
And going over land and sea,
Burn with the Word the hearts of men!"

THE FOUNTAIN OF BAKHCHISARAY



Translated by William D. Lewis

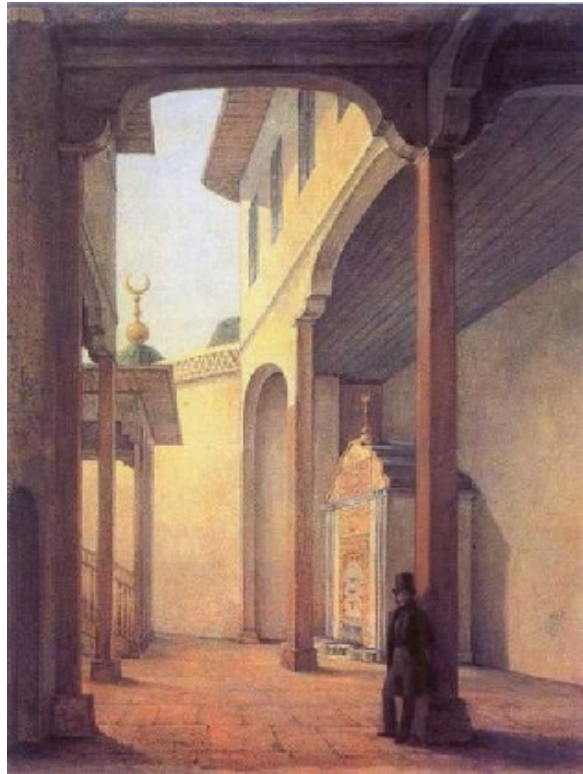
Published in 1824, this narrative poem was written in the spring of 1821, after Pushkin had visited The Fountain of Tears at the Khan Palace in Bakhchisaray. The poem has since inspired several musical compositions, including Boris Asafyev's 1934 ballet and Alexander Ilyinsky's 1911 opera of the same name.



The title page of the poem's first edition

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TARTAR SONG.



'Pushkin in Bakhchisaray Palace' by Grigory Chernetsov

THE FOUNTAIN OF BAKHCHISARAI

A Tale of the Tauride

Mute sat Giray, with downcast eye,
As though some spell in sorrow bound him,
His slavish courtiers thronging nigh,
In sad expectance stood around him.
The lips of all had silence sealed,
Whilst, bent on him, each look observant,
Saw grief's deep trace and passion fervent
Upon his gloomy brow revealed.
But the proud Khan his dark eye raising,
And on the courtiers fiercely gazing,
Gave signal to them to begone!
The chief, unwitnessed and alone,
Now yields him to his bosom's smart,
Deeper upon his brow severe
Is traced the anguish of his heart;
As full fraught clouds on mirrors clear
Reflected terrible appear!

What fills that haughty soul with pain?
What thoughts such madd'ning tumults cause?
With Russia plots he war again?
Would he to Poland dictate laws?
Say, is the sword of vengeance glancing?
Does bold revolt claim nature's right?
Do realms oppressed alarm excite?
Or sabres of fierce foes advancing?
Ah no! no more his proud steed prancing
Beneath him guides the Khan to war,--
Such thoughts his mind has banished far.

Has treason scaled the harem's wall,
Whose height might treason's self appal,
And slavery's daughter fled his power,
To yield her to the daring Giaour?

No! pining in his harem sadly,
No wife of his would act so madly;
To wish or think they scarcely dare;
By wretches, cold and heartless, guarded,
Hope from each breast so long discarded;
Treason could never enter there.
Their beauties unto none revealed,

They bloom within the harem's towers,
As in a hot-house bloom the flowers
Which erst perfumed Arabia's field.
To them the days in sameness dreary,
And months and years pass slow away,
In solitude, of life grown weary,
Well pleased they see their charms decay.
Each day, alas! the past resembling,
Time loiters through their halls and bowers;
In idleness, and fear, and trembling,
The captives pass their joyless hours.
The youngest seek, indeed, reprieve
Their hearts in striving to deceive
Into oblivion of distress,
By vain amusements, gorgeous dress,
Or by the noise of living streams,
In soft translucency meand'ring,
To lose their thoughts in fancy's dreams,
Through shady groves together wand'ring.
But the vile eunuch too is there,
In his base duty ever zealous,
Escape is hopeless to the fair
From ear so keen and eye so jealous.
He ruled the harem, order reigned
Eternal there; the trusted treasure
He watched with loyalty unfeigned,
His only law his chieftain's pleasure,
Which as the Koran he maintained.
His soul love's gentle flame derides,
And like a statue he abides
Hatred, contempt, reproaches, jests,
Nor prayers relax his temper rigid,
Nor timid sighs from tender breasts,
To all alike the wretch is frigid.
He knows how woman's sighs can melt,
Freeman and bondman he had felt
Her art in days when he was younger;
Her silent tear, her suppliant look,
Which once his heart confiding shook,
Now move not,--he believes no longer!

When, to relieve the noontide heat,
The captives go their limbs to lave,
And in sequestered, cool retreat
Yield all their beauties to the wave,
No stranger eye their charms may greet,

But their strict guard is ever nigh,
Viewing with unimpassioned eye
These beauteous daughters of delight;
He constant, even in gloom of night,
Through the still harem cautious stealing,
Silent, o'er carpet-covered floors,
And gliding through half-opened doors,
From couch to couch his pathway feeling,
With envious and unwearied care
Watching the unsuspecting fair;
And whilst in sleep unguarded lying,
Their slightest movement, breathing, sighing,
He catches with devouring ear.
O! curst that moment inauspicious
Should some loved name in dreams be sighed,
Or youth her unpermitted wishes
To friendship venture to confide.

What pang is Giray's bosom tearing?
Extinguished is his loved *chubouk*,
Whilst or to move or breathe scarce daring,
The eunuch watches every look;
Quick as the chief, approaching near him,
Beckons, the door is open thrown,
And Giray wanders through his harem
Where joy to him no more is known.
Near to a fountain's lucid waters
Captivity's unhappy daughters
The Khan await, in fair array,
Around on silken carpets crowded,
Viewing, beneath a heaven unclouded,
With childish joy the fishes play
And o'er the marble cleave their way,
Whose golden scales are brightly glancing,
And on the mimic billows dancing.
Now female slaves in rich attire
Serve sherbet to the beauteous fair,
Whilst plaintive strains from viewless choir
Float sudden on the ambient air.

TARTAR SONG.

I.

Heaven visits man with days of sadness,
Embitters oft his nights with tears;

Blest is the Fakir who with gladness
Views Mecca in declining years.

II.

Blest he who sees pale Death await him
On Danube's ever glorious shore;
The girls of Paradise shall greet him,
And sorrows ne'er afflict him more.

III.

But he more blest, O beauteous Zarem!
Who quits the world and all its woes,
To clasp thy charms within the harem,
Thou lovelier than the unplucked rose!

They sing, but-where, alas! is Zarem,
Love's star, the glory of the harem?
Pallid and sad no praise she hears,
Deaf to all sounds of joy her ears,
Downcast with grief, her youthful form
Yields like the palm tree to the storm,
Fair Zarem's dreams of bliss are o'er,
Her loved Giray loves her no more!

He leaves thee! yet whose charms divine
Can equal, fair Grusinian! thine?
Shading thy brow, thy raven hair
Its lily fairness makes more fair;
Thine eyes of love appear more bright
Than noonday's beam, more dark than night;
Whose voice like thine can breathe of blisses,
Filling the heart with soft desire?
Like thine, ah! whose inflaming kisses
Can kindle passion's wildest fire?

Who that has felt thy twining arms
Could quit them for another's charms?
Yet cold, and passionless, and cruel,
Giray can thy vast love despise,
Passing the lonesome night in sighs
Heaved for another; fiercer fuel
Burns in his heart since the fair Pole
Is placed within the chief's control.

The young Maria recent war
Had borne in conquest from afar;
Not long her love-enkindling eyes
Had gazed upon these foreign skies;
Her aged father's boast and pride,
She bloomed in beauty by his side;
Each wish was granted ere expressed.
She to his heart the object dearest,
His sole desire to see her blessed;
As when the skies from clouds are clearest,
Still from her youthful heart to chase
Her childish sorrows his endeavour,
Hoping in after life that never
Her woman's duties might efface
Remembrance of her earlier hours,
But oft that fancy would retrace
Life's blissful spring-time decked in flowers.
Her form a thousand charms unfolded,
Her face by beauty's self was moulded,
Her dark blue eyes were full of fire,--
All nature's stores on her were lavished;
The magic harp with soft desire,
When touched by her, the senses ravished.
Warriors and knights had sought in vain
Maria's virgin heart to move,
And many a youth in secret pain
Pined for her in despairing love.
But love she knew not, in her breast
Tranquil it had not yet intruded,
Her days in mirth, her nights in rest,
In her paternal halls secluded,
Passed heedless, peace her bosom's guest.

That time is past! The Tartar's force
Rushed like a torrent o'er her nation,--
Rages less fierce the conflagration
Devouring harvests in its course,--
Poland it swept with devastation,
Involving all in equal fate,
The villages, once mirthful, vanished,
From their red ruins joy was banished,
The gorgeous palace desolate!
Maria is the victor's prize;--
Within the palace chapel laid,
Slumb'ring among th'illustrious dead,

In recent tomb her father lies;
His ancestors repose around,
Long freed from life and its alarms;
With coronets and princely arms
Bedecked their monuments abound!
A base successor now holds sway,--
Maria's natal halls his hand
Tyrannic rules, and strikes dismay
And wo throughout the ravaged land.

Alas! the Princess sorrow's chalice
Is fated to the dregs to drain,
Immured in Bakchesaria's palace
She sighs for liberty in vain;
The Khan observes the maiden's pain,
His heart is at her grief afflicted,
His bosom strange emotions fill,
And least of all Maria's will
Is by the harem's laws restricted.
The hateful guard, of all the dread,
Learns silent to respect and fear her,
His eye ne'er violates her bed,
Nor day nor night he ventures near her;
To her he dares not speak rebuke,
Nor on her cast suspecting look.
Her bath she sought by none attended,
Except her chosen female slave,
The Khan to her such freedom gave;
But rarely he himself offended
By visits, the desponding fair,
Remotely lodged, none else intruded;
It seemed as though some jewel rare,
Something unearthly were secluded,
And careful kept untroubled there.

Within her chamber thus secure,
By virtue guarded, chaste and pure,
The lamp of faith, incessant burning,
The VIRGIN'S image blest illumed,
The comfort of the spirit mourning
And trust of those to sorrow doomed.
The holy symbol's face reflected
The rays of hope in splendour bright,
And the rapt soul by faith directed
To regions of eternal light.
Maria, near the VIRGIN kneeling,

In silence gave her anguish way,
Unnoticed by the crowd unfeeling,
And whilst the rest, or sad or gay,
Wasted in idleness the day,
The sacred image still concealing,
Before it pouring forth her prayer,
She watched with ever jealous care;
Even as our hearts to error given,
Yet lighted by a spark from heaven,
Howe'er from virtue's paths we swerve,
One holy feeling still preserve.

Now night invests with black apparel
Luxurious Tauride's verdant fields,
Whilst her sweet notes from groves of laurel
The plaintive Philomela yields.
But soon night's glorious queen, advancing
Through cloudless skies to the stars' song,
Scatters the hills and dales along,
The lustre of her rays entrancing.
In Bakchesaria's streets roamed free
The Tartars' wives in garb befitting,
They like unprisoned shades were flitting
From house to house their friends to see,
And while the evening hours away
In harmless sports or converse gay.
The inmates of the harem slept;--
Still was the palace, night impending
O'er all her silent empire kept;
The eunuch guard, no more offending
The fair ones by his presence, now
Slumbered, but fear his soul attending
Troubled his rest and knit his brow;
Suspicion kept his fancy waking,
And on his mind incessant preyed,
The air the slightest murmur breaking
Assailed his ear with sounds of dread.
Now, by some noise deceitful cheated,
Starts from his sleep the timid slave,
Listens to hear the noise repeated,
But all is silent as the grave,
Save where the fountains softly sounding
Break from their marble prisons free,
Or night's sweet birds the scene surrounding
Pour forth their notes of melody:
Long does he hearken to the strain,

Then sinks fatigued in sleep again.

Luxurious East! how soft thy nights,
What magic through the soul they pour!
How fruitful they of fond delights
To those who Mahomet adore!
What splendour in each house is found,
Each garden seems enchanted ground;
Within the harem's precincts quiet
Beneath fair Luna's placid ray,
When angry feelings cease to riot
There love inspires with softer sway!

The women sleep;--but one is there
Who sleeps not; goaded by despair
Her couch she quits with dread intent,
On awful errand is she bent;
Breathless she through the door swift flying
Passes unseen; her timid feet
Scarce touch the floor, she glides so fleet.
In doubtful slumber restless lying
The eunuch thwarts the fair one's path,
Ah! who can speak his bosom's wrath?
False is the quiet sleep would throw
Around that gray and care-worn brow;
She like a spirit vanished by
Viewless, unheard as her own sigh!

The door she reaches, trembling opes,
Enters, and looks around with awe,
What sorrows, anguish, terrors, hopes,
Rushed through her heart at what she saw!
The image of the sacred maid,
The Christian's matron, reigning there,
And cross attracted first the fair,
By the dim lamp-light scarce displayed!
Oh! Grusinka, of earlier days
The vision burst upon thy soul,
The tongue long silent uttered praise,
The heart throbs high, but sin's control
Cannot escape, 'tis passion, passion sways!

The Princess in a maid's repose
Slumbered, her cheek, tinged like the rose,
By feverish thought, in beauty blooms,
And the fresh tear that stains her face
A smile of tenderness illumines.

Thus cheers the moon fair Flora's race,
When by the rain opprest they lie
The charm and grief of every eye!
It seemed as though an angel slept
From heaven descended, who, distressed,
Vented the feelings of his breast,
And for the harem's inmates wept!
Alas! poor Zarem, wretched fair,
By anguish urged to mere despair,
On bended knee, in tone subdued
And melting strain, for pity sued.

"Oh! spurn not such a suppliant's prayer!"
Her tones so sad, her sighs so deep,
Startled the Princess in her sleep;
Wond'ring, she views with dread before her
The stranger beauty, frightened hears
For mercy her soft voice implore her,
Raises her up with trembling hand,
And makes of her the quick demand,
"Who speaks? in night's still hour alone,
Wherefore art here?" "A wretched one,
To thee I come," the fair replied,
"A suitor not to be denied;
Hope, hope alone my soul sustains;
Long have I happiness enjoyed,
And lived from sorrow free and care,
But now, alas! a prey to pains
And terrors, Princess hear my prayer,
Oh! listen, or I am destroyed!

Not here beheld I first the light,
Far hence my native land, but yet
Alas! I never can forget
Objects once precious to my sight;
Well I remember towering mountains,
Snow-ridged, replete with boiling fountains,
Woods pervious scarce to wolf or deer,
Nor faith, nor manners such as here;
But, by what cruel fate o'ercome,
How I was snatched, or when, from home
I know not,--well the heaving ocean
Do I remember, and its roar,
But, ah! my heart such wild commotion
As shakes it now ne'er felt before.
I in the harem's quiet bloomed,

Tranquil myself, waiting, alas!
With willing heart what love had doomed;
Its secret wishes came to pass:
Giray his peaceful harem sought,
For feats of war no longer burned,
Nor, pleased, upon its horrors thought,
To these fair scenes again returned.

“Before the Khan with bosoms beating
We stood, timid my eyes I raised,
When suddenly our glances meeting,
I drank in rapture as I gazed;
He called me to him,--from that hour
We lived in bliss beyond the power
Of evil thought or wicked word,
The tongue of calumny unheard,
Suspicion, doubt, or jealous fear,
Of weariness alike unknown,
Princess, thou comest a captive here,
And all my joys are overthrown,
Giray with sinful passion burns,
His soul possessed of thee alone,
My tears and sighs the traitor spurns;
No more his former thoughts, nor feeling
For me now cherishes Giray,
Scarce his disgust, alas! concealing,
He from my presence hastes away.
Princess, I know the fault not thine
That Giray loves thee, oh! then hear
A suppliant wretch, nor spurn her prayer!

Throughout the harem none but thou
Could rival beauties such as mine
Nor make him violate his vow;
Yet, Princess! in thy bosom cold
The heart to mine left thus forlorn,
The love I feel cannot be told,
For passion, Princess, was I born.
Yield me Giray then; with these tresses
Oft have his wandering fingers played,
My lips still glow with his caresses,
Snatched as he sighed, and swore, and prayed,
Oaths broken now so often plighted!
Hearts mingled once now disunited!
His treason I cannot survive;
Thou seest I weep, I bend my knee,

Ah! if to pity thou'rt alive,
My former love restore to me.
Reply not! thee I do not blame,
Thy beauties have bewitched Giray,
Blinded his heart to love and fame,
Then yield him up to me, I pray,
Or by contempt, repulse, or grief,
Turn from thy love th'ungenerous chief!
Swear by thy faith, for what though mine
Conform now to the Koran's laws,
Acknowledged here within the harem,
Princess, my mother's faith was thine,
By that faith swear to give to Zarem
Giray unaltered, as he was!
But listen! the sad prey to scorn
If I must live, Princess, have care,
A dagger still doth Zarem wear,--
I near the Caucasus was born!"

She spake, then sudden disappeared,
And left the Princess in dismay,
Who scarce knew what or why she feared;
Such words of passion till that day
She ne'er had heard. Alas! was she
To be the ruthless chieftain's prey?
Vain was all hope his grasp to flee.
Oh! God, that in some dungeon's gloom
Remote, forgotten, she had lain,
Or that it were her blessed doom
To 'scape dishonour, life, and pain!
How would Maria with delight
This world of wretchedness resign;
Vanished of youth her visions bright,
Abandoned she to fates malign!
Sinless she to the world was given,
And so remains, thus pure and fair,
Her soul is called again to heaven,
And angel joys await it there!

Days passed away; Maria slept
Peaceful, no cares disturbed her, now,--
From earth the orphan maid was swept.
But who knew when, or where, or how?
If prey to grief or pain she fell,
If slain or heaven-struck, who can tell?
She sleeps; her loss the chieftain grieves,

And his neglected harem leaves,
Flies from its tranquil precincts far,
And with his Tartars takes the field,
Fierce rushes mid the din of war,
And brave the foe that does not yield,
For mad despair hath nerved his arm,
Though in his heart is grief concealed,
With passion's hopeless transports warm.
His blade he swings aloft in air
And wildly brandishes, then low
It falls, whilst he with pallid stare
Gazes, and tears in torrents flow.

His harem by the chief deserted,
In foreign lands he warring roved,
Long nor in wish nor thought reverted
To scene once cherished and beloved.
His women to the eunuch's rage
Abandoned, pined and sank in age;
The fair Grusinian now no more
Yielded her soul to passion's power,
Her fate was with Maria's blended,
On the same night their sorrows ended;
Seized by mute guards the hapless fair
Into a deep abyss they threw,--
If vast her crime, through love's despair,
Her punishment was dreadful too!

At length th'exhausted Khan returned,
Enough of waste his sword had dealt,
The Russian cot no longer burned,
Nor Caucasus his fury felt.
In token of Maria's loss
A marble fountain he upreared
In spot recluse;--the Christian's cross
Upon the monument appeared,
(Surmounting it a crescent bright,
Emblem of ignorance and night!)
Th'inscription mid the silent waste
Not yet has time's rude hand effaced,
Still do the gurgling waters pour
Their streams dispensing sadness round,
As mothers weep for sons no more,
In never-ending sorrows drowned.
In morn fair maids, (and twilight late,)
Roam where this monument appears,

And pitying poor Maria's fate
Entitle it the FOUNT OF TEARS!

My native land abandoned long,
I sought this realm of love and song.
Through Bakchesaria's palace wandered,
Upon its vanished greatness pondered;
All silent now those spacious halls,
And courts deserted, once so gay
With feasters thronged within their walls,
Carousing after battle fray.
Even now each desolated room
And ruined garden luxury breathes,
The fountains play, the roses bloom,
The vine unnoticed twines its wreaths,
Gold glistens, shrubs exhale perfume.
The shattered casements still are there
Within which once, in days gone by,
Their beads of amber chose the fair,
And heaved the unregarded sigh;
The cemetery there I found,
Of conquering khans the last abode,
Columns with marble turbans crowned
Their resting-place the traveller showed,
And seemed to speak fate's stern decree,
"As they are now such all shall be!"
Where now those chiefs? the harem where?
Alas! how sad scene once so fair!
Now breathless silence chains the air!
But not of this my mind was full,
The roses' breath, the fountains flowing,
The sun's last beam its radiance throwing
Around, all served my heart to lull
Into forgetfulness, when lo!
A maiden's shade, fairer than snow,
Across the court swift winged its flight;--
Whose shade, oh friends! then struck my sight?
Whose beauteous image hovering near
Filled me with wonder and with fear?
Maria's form beheld I then?
Or was it the unhappy Zarem,
Who jealous thither came again
To roam through the deserted harem?
That tender look I cannot flee,
Those charms still earthly still I see!

He who the muse and peace adores,
Forgetting glory, love, and gold,
Again thy ever flowery shores
Soon, Salgir! joyful shall behold;
The bard shall wind thy rocky ways
Filled with fond sympathies, shall view
Tauride's bright skies and waves of blue
With greedy and enraptured gaze.
Enchanting region! full of life
Thy hills, thy woods, thy leaping streams,
Ambered and rubied vines, all rife
With pleasure, spot of fairy dreams!
Valleys of verdure, fruits, and flowers,
Cool waterfalls and fragrant bowers!
All serve the traveller's heart to fill
With joy as he in hour of morn
By his accustomed steed is borne
In safety o'er dell, rock, and hill,
Whilst the rich herbage, bent with dews,
Sparkles and rustles on the ground,
As he his venturous path pursues
Where AYOUDAHGA'S crags surround!

THE GIPSIES



Translated by Charles Edward Turner

This narrative poem was originally written in 1824 and published in 1827. Composed during Pushkin's exile in the south of the Russian Empire, *The Gipsies* is one of his most popular poems, which has been praised for its originality and handling of psychological and moral issues, serving to inspire many operas and ballets, as well as other contemporary poets.

The Gipsies opens in Bessarabia, modern day Romania, with a colourful and lively description of a gipsy camp's activities. Written almost entirely in iambic tetrameter, the narrative poem introduces an old man waiting for his daughter Zemfira to return home, while his dinner grows cold. When she arrives, she announces that she has brought Aleko with her, an exile who has fled the city, because the law is pursuing him.



Bessarabia, at the time of the poem's setting

THE GIPSIES

I.

In noisy crowds the gipsies bold
Their way through Bessarabia tramp;
To-day they pitch their camp and set
Their tattered tents by river-side.
As free as bird, they choose their haunt,
And peaceful sleep 'neath open sky.
From midst the wheels of waggon-vans,
Half-covered with thick canvas roofs,
Curls high the flame, and round the fire
Within their tent the family group
Prepare with care the evening meal.
In open field the horses graze;
Beyond the tent the tamed bear lies;
And all is gay along the steppe
With busy cares of household life,
With women's songs, and children's laugh,
And measured beat of blacksmith's stroke,
As they prepare for morrow's march.
And now, o'er all the nomad camp
Unbroken silence calmly reigns,
And naught is heard on tranquil steppe,
Save bark of hound or neighing steed.
Throughout the camp the fires are quenched,
. And all is peace. The moon, sole queen
In heaven's expanse, sheds forth her rays,
And bathes the sleeping camp in light.
All sleep, save one old man who sits
Before the half-extinguished fire
And warms himself with its last heat.
And oft he scans the fields remote,
Enwrapt in evening's soft, white mist.
His daughter young and fair is wont
In all to have her way, and now
Has gone to stroll the lonely fields.
She will come back; but it is late,
And o'er the moon the clouds or night
Already gather thick and fast.
But no Zemphire returns: meanwhile,
The old man's modest meal grows cold.

At last she comes, and close behind
Follows along her path a youth,
A stranger to the gipsy sire.
“See, father mine”, the maiden said,
“I bring a guest; beyond the mounds
I found him lost on the wild steppe,
And refuge in our camp I offered.
He lies beneath the ban of law,
But I have sworn to be his friend;
Aleko is his name, and he,
Where’er I go, will follow me.”

OLD MAN.

I welcome thee. Remain the night
Beneath the shelter of our tent;
Or, if thou wilt, stay longer here,
As thou thinkst fit, for I consent
Our board and roof with thee to share.
Be one of us, and learn our fate
To bear, the fate of vagrants poor,
But free, and with the early dawn
Shalt find a place with us in van,
And prove what trade art skilled to ply:
The iron forge.... or sing a song,
And show the villagers our bear.

ALEKO.

I will remain.

ZEMPHIRE.

He shall be mine:
And who shall chase him from my side?
But it grows late; the crescent moon
Has set; the fields drink in the mist;
And heavy sleep weighs down mine eyes.

II.

Tis dawn. Around the sleepy tent
With watchful steps the old man strolls.
“Arise, Zemphire, the sun is up;
Awake, my guest, ‘tis time to march:
Quick, children, quit the couch of ease!
With busy haste they all start up;
The tents are raised; the waggon-vans
Stand ready for the long day’s inarch.

At given sign the swarming crowds
Begin to make their slow descent
Through steep defiles precipitous.
In hand tilt-carts the asses draw
Their close-packed loads of children gay;
And mingling groups of old and young
In orderly disorder move.
Loud cries, and shouts, and gipsy songs;
The bear's low growl, and frequent creak
Of his impatient, irksome chain;
The particoloured, tattered robes;
Shoeless men half-clad and children;
The angry bark and howl of dogs;
The noisy bagpipe's piercing notes;
The grating harsh of turning wheels.
A picture wild and dissonant,
But all alert and full of soul;
Unlike our world's benumbing ease,
Unlike the barren life of town,
A life as dull as chant of slaves.

III.

With weary glance the youth looks back
Upon the now unpeopled plain;
Nor can he yet the secret cause
Of grief that fills his heart discern.
Beside him lies the black-eyed maid;
Lord of himself, lives as he will;
And o'er him shines the glowing sun
In his rounded midday beauty.
What, then, torments his youthful soul?
What care disturbs his restless heart?

The bird of air is free and knows
Nor anxious toil nor daily care;
Nor fretsome seeks to weave a nest,
That shall defy the ages' wear;
But on the branch the long night sleeps,
Till sun shall don his morning robe,
And then, responsive to God's call,
With quickened thrill sings out his song.
When spring, fair nature's darling child,
Gives place to sultry summer's heat,
And later autumn brings its due,
Dark clouds, and mists, and frequent rains,

Men's hopes fall low, and they are drear;
The bird to other distant lands,
To warmer shores and bluer seas,
Will fly, and wait return of spring.

Like the bird that is free from care,
An exile lone, bird of passage,
He knew not where to lay his head,
Nor was there aught to touch his soul.
To him the world lay open wide,
Nor cared he where he strayed or slept;
But each new day he freely left
To fate's disposal and control.
The changes and alarms of life
Thus failed to break his peace of mind.
At times, the far-off star of fame
Would tempt him leave his ease, and climb;
In vain, the world before him spread
Its idle pomps and pleasures vile;
Not seldom o'er his lonely head
The thunder roared and threat'ning broke;
But naught he recked of tempests rude,
And dozed alike in storm and calm;
He lived his life, nor recognised
The power of blind and cunning fate.
But, God: what passions wild have stormed
Aleko's seeming tranquil breast!
With what mad fury have they raged,
And torn in twain his wounded soul!
And thinks he to have tamed them now?
They shall awake, their hour will come!

IV.

ZEMPHIRE.

But say, my friend, dost not regret
The world thou hast behind thee left?

ALEKO.

And what is there to leave?

ZEMPHIRE.

Thou knowst:
Country, friends and native city.

ALEKO.

Wherefore regret? Ah, didst thou know,

Couldst but once conceive or measure
The vileness of their stifling town!
Where men do herd in crowds, nor breathe
The morning fresh, or mountain free.
Or scent of spring on meadow sweet;
Are shamed of love, and banish thought,
Consent to sell their freedom dear,
To, fetish idols bow their heads,
Will sue for pelf, and hug their chains.
What have I left? The falser's lie
The smirking bigot's narrow creed.
The senseless hate of unwashed mob,
Rank, orders, title, bought with shame.

ZEMPHIRE.

But there are mansions vast and rich,
There are carpets varicoloured,
There are balls and banquets gayest,
And there are jewelled maidens fair.

ALEKO.

What gain can bring the to wn's mad Joys?
Where love reigns not, joy cannot be.
Better far than all their maidens,
Art thou, Zemphire, though poorly clad,
Of jewels and of necklace bare!
Change not, my true and faithful friend,
And I'll keep true to my sole wish,
With thee will share my love, my cares,
My life, in willing banishment

OLD MAN.

I see, thou lovst us and our folk,
Though bora amidst a people rich; But freedom is not alway's dear
To him who has been born in ease.
Amongst us runs a legend old:
From southern climes was banished once
A stranger to our land.... his name
I knew, but have forgotten since....
He was already old in years,
But still was young in heart and soul;
Possessed the wondrous gift of song,
And voice like murmur of the waves.
And all who knew him loved him well,
And on the Danube's shore he lived,
Offended none, and none despised,

Enchanting all with song divine;
Was not proud, nor reasoned wisely,
But weak and timid, like a child.
For him our folk would hunt the beast,
Or trap the fish in close-knit net;
And when the river swift would freeze,
And wintry winds began to howl,
For him, their aged favourite,
They deftly stitched warm skins of fur.
For he was strange to petty toil
And all the tasks of daily life,
And lived a wand'rer pale and poor.
An angry god had punished him,
He said, for some offence and crime.
And now he prayed that death might come;
And as he roamed the Danube shore,
His grief he shared with its blue waves,
And oft would shed hot, burning tears,
At thought of his far-distant home.
And ere he died, he prayed that we
His body to the south would bring;
For never could he sleep in peace,
Unless in his dear earth he lay,
His home once more his native land.

ALEKO.

Such fate awaits thy noblest sons,
Oh Rome, great empress of the world!
Singer of love, hymner of gods,
Tell me, what is poet's glory?
A grave unknown, obscure; the theme
Of legend passed from mouth to mouth;
The nameless hero of wild tale
By gipsy told in smoky tent.

V.

Two years have passed, and as before,
The peaceful band of gipsies free
Are ne'er relused, but "easy find
A friendly welcome and repose.
All social lies and cheats thrown off,
Aleko is as free as they;
Regretting naught and spared all care,
Their roaming life he daily shares.
He is the same, nor have they changed;

The years gone by he has forgot,
And gipsy life is now his own.
The tent's hard couch on which he sleeps,
Unconscious of the morrow's fate;
The routine march of ease unbroke;
The language poor, but soft and sweet;
In all he finds alike delight.
The bear, its native haunt forgot,
Is now the sharer of his tent.
In villages that skirt the road,
They stop before Moldavian homes;
To please a timid, gaping crowd,
The bear will dance his clumsy step,
And grol wimpatient at his chain;
And, leaning on his pilgrim-staff,
The old man idly beats his drum;
Aleko, singing, leads the bear;
Zemphire is sent to make the round,
And beg from each a small reward
But night has set, and they all three
The evening meal prepare to share.
The old man sleeps and all is still;
Within the tent dead silence reigns.

VI.

The tents gleam bright in spring sun's rays,
The old man warms his sluggish blood,
His daughter sings a song of love,
Aleko listens and grows pale.

ZEMPHIRE (*singing*).

Husband old, husband fierce,
Burn, hack me with thy sword'
I am bold, do not fear
Either sword or fire's flame.

Knowst thou not, I hate thee?
Knowst thou not, I scorn thee?
Another has my love,
And, loving, I can die!

ALEKO.

Cease, I pray, thy singing wearies,
Nor do I like such savage rhymes.

ZEMPHIRE.

My song offends? But what care I?
'Tis for myself alone I sing.

Burn, hack me with thy sword,
No word shalt hear from me;
Husband old, husband fierce,
His name I'll ne'er betray!

He's fresher than the spring,
He breathes warm summer's heat
With daring youth he glows,
And none but me he loves!

Softly I caressed him
In shadow of the night,
As merrily we laughed,
And mocked at thy gray hairs

ALEKO.

Cease, Zemphire, cease! It is enough!

ZEMPHIRE.

And hast thou understood my song?

ALEKO.

Zemphire!

ZEMPHIRE.

Be angry, if thou wilt:
It was to thee I sang my song.
(*She goes away singing*).

OLD MAN.

I remember, I remember,
It is a song of olden days;
And years ago, to please our folk,
Marie would sing this rhyme to them.
On winter nights, when we were camped
On the Kagoula barren steppes,
Marie would chant the savage lay.
And rock the child before the fire
I lose all count of bygone days.
And quickly fades their memory;
But this one song has ta'en deep root.,
And still I hear its mocking notes.

Now all is still; 'tis night; the moon
With silver tips the southern pole.
Sudden the gipsy-sire is roused
From sleep by Zemphire's touch and voice.

ZEMPHIRE.
In his sleep Aleko frights me;
He tosses, groans, and sighs, and weeps.

OLD MAN.
Disturb him not, but silence keep.
I oft have heard the Russians say,
At night, the demon of the house
Will haunt the troubled sleeper's dream,
And then at dawn itself depart.
Till then, 'tis well thou sitst by me.

ZEMPHIRE.
In sleep he starts, and cries, Zemphire!

OLD MAN.
Though dreaming, still he seeks for thee
Dearer than all thou art to him.

ZEMPHIRE.
And yet, his love has brought no joy:
My heart would fain throw off the yoke,
Be free again.... But hush!... listen!
He mutters now another's name.

OLD MAN.
Whose name?

ZEMPHIRE.
Dost thou not hear? He groans,
And grinds his teeth. 'Tis horrible!
I will awake him quick.

OLD MAN.
Why seek
To chase the demon of the night?
It will itself depart.

ZEMPHIRE.
I hear
Him restless turn, and now he calls:
I go. Farewell! Sleep, father, sleep!

ALEKO.

Where hast thou been?

ZEMPHIRE.

I was with father.

Some evil spirit did torment

And plague thee in thy sleep. I dared

No longer stay'. But thou didst grind

Thy teeth, and called me.

ALEKO.

In my dream

It seemed as if between us was —

But no! it is too horrible!

ZEMPHIRE.

Dost thou believe in cheating dreams?

ALEKO.

In none, in naught, do I believe;

Nor dreams, nor lover's secret vows;

Nor that thy heart can loyal keep.

VIII.

OLD MAN.

And why, in vain caprice of youth,

Dost thou, like furnace sighing, moan?

Here men are free, the skies are bright,

And women own no fetter-bonds.

Grieve not, nor be cast down in soul.

ALEKO.

But, father, she no longer loves.

OLD MAN.

Console thyself: she is a child.

Thy grief to reason is perverse:

Thou lovst with passion and with fire;

A passing jest is women's love.

Look up; beneath the wide expanse

The moon pursues her unchecked path,

And, as she moves, she gently sheds

Her fickle light on all below;

A moment gilds a favoured cloud,

Only the next to leave it dark,

And flood its rival with her light.

But who shall stop her trackless course,
Bid her stay and no farther roam?
And who shall say to maiden's heart,
Love one, and only one, ne'er change.
It cannot be. —

ALEKO.

How she loved me!
How tenderly she bent o'er me,
And in the silence of the night,
Her head soft pillowed on my breast,
With childish mirth and innocence
Whispered, laughing, tender nothings,
And with caresses winsome could
In one short moment chase away
All gloomy thoughts and craven fears!
And now, thou tellst me, she is false,
That she, Zemphire, no longer loves'

OLD MAN.

Hearken, and I will story tell
Of myself and years long, long past,
Before Moscow had tried to win
Her new domains on Danube shore.
You see, I would recall, my friend.
The sorrow of far, younger years.
The mighty Sultan then we feared:
The Pascha ruled the Budschack plain,
And lofty heights of Ackermann.
Then I was young, and my glad soul
Within me leaped, all free of care;
And then my jet-black, raven curls
Flowed down unmixed with elder gray.
Among the maidens young was one,
Their queen in beauty — long I loved
And worshipped her, as men the sun.
At last I won her — she was mine!
Alas, like falling star, my youth,
Gleaming, flashed, and quickly vanished:
But swifter far the reign of love
Rose and flitted by; — one short year,
And Marie, my queen, betrayed me!
Near the wide, deep lakes of Kagoul,
We chanced to meet a stranger tribe,
Who pitched their tents at mountain's foot,
Where we had made our sojourn brief;

Two nights we friendly camped together,
And on the third they sudden left
With them.... her daughter left behind,
Marie escaped to pleasures new.
I sleeping was, and when dawn broke,
And I arose, I found her not!
I called.... in vain — no answer came!
Many a day poor Zemphire pined,
And wept; my tears I joined with hers.
But from that day my heart grew cold,
Unstirred by maiden's wiles or charms;
Nor have I sought a mate to share
My lot; but all alone have passed,
Resigned, the cheating hours of life.

ALEKO.

And wherefore didst thou not at once
Pursue the faithless perjured pair,
And plunge thy dagger in the heart
Of robber and his paramour?

OLD MAN.

But why? Youth is free, free as a bird.
Who has strength to curb the flight of love?
To each one day of joy is sent;
And what has been can ne'er return.

ALEKO.

Mine not the nature to forego
My right without a struggle fierce,
Be robbed the joy of sweet revenge.
Nay, if on brink of ocean cliff
I found my hated foe asleep,
I swear, I should not think to spare
His life, but with my foot would toss
O'er edge of cliff his helpless trunk,
And laugh in his pale, upturned face
Of wakened horror and surprise.
And in mine ear the water's splash
Would echo like the stirring sound
Of conquering march loud and gay.

IX.

YOUNG GIPSY.

Yet one more kiss, before we part!

ZEMPHIRE.

Lime flies: jealous he is, and harsh.

YOUNG GIPSY.

A last.... but long caress.... but one!

ZEMPHIRE.

Farewell, before he comes to seek me.

YOUNG GIPSY.

But say, when shall we meet again?

ZEMPHIRE.

To-night, when as the moon goes down,
We'll meet beyond the mounds. Farewell

YOUNG GIPSY.

You will forget to come, I fear.

ZEMPHIRE.

Away!... Fear not!... I'll come, I swear!

X.

Aleko sleeps. But dreams confused
Disturb and haunt his troubled rest;
And with a startled cry he wakes,
And stretches forth his jealous hand,
Which falls on cold and vacant sheet;
No sleeping Zemphire lies by him.
With boding heart he listens long,
But all is still; and, filled with dread,
A chilling fear runs through his veins,
As out he hurries from the tent.
Pale and trembling, far he wanders,
But all the field is wrapt in sleep
The moon is hid behind the clouds
And twinkling light of stars is dim.
The faintest track of steps, the dews
Have nigh effaced, still show the way
That leads up to the burial mounds.
With eager pace he makes his way,
By demon urged along the path,
And stands before the long-ranged heaps,
That rear their pale and spectral tops.
And, filled with sense of coming ill,

Scarce his aching limbs can bear him:
With quivering lips and trembling knees
He pushes on — and does he dream?
He sees two shadows close to him,
And hears the murmured whisper near,
That floats above the lonely mounds.

FIRST VOICE.

‘Tis time!

SECOND VOICE.

Why this haste?

FIRST VOICE.

I must away!

SECOND VOICE.

Nay, rather let us wait the day!

FIRST VOICE.

‘Tis late!

SECOND VOICE.

How timid is thy love!
One minute!

FIRST VOICE.

Wilt thou be my death?

SECOND VOICE.

One minute more!

FIRST VOICE.

But if he wakes,
And finds me gone?

ALEKO.

I have awaked!
Whither so fast? There is no haste!
‘Tis well, we need not search for graves!

ZEMPHIRE.

Darling, run, escape!

ALEKO.

Stay, sir, stay!
Whither, fair gipsy, wilt thou run?
Die!

(He kills him with a dagger.)

ZEMPHIRE.

What hast thou done?

YOUNG GIPSY.

I die! Farewell!

ZEMPHIRE.

Aleko, thou hast slain my friend!

And, see, thou art all stained with blood!.

Oh, what hast thou done?

ALEKO.

I? Nothing!

His love, once thy breath, breathe it now!

ZEMPHIRE.

Enough! I have no fear of thee!

Thine empty threats, I hold in scorn!

Thee and thy bloody crime, I curse!

ALEKO.

Follow!

(He stabs Zemphire).

ZEMPHIRE

And, loving, I will die!

Night's clouds were streaked with red of dawn.

Beyond the hills Aleko sate

Alone on ancient burial mound,

With blood-stained dagger in his hand.

Near him lay two lifeless bodies;

His face was fixed and motionless,

And vacant stared at gipsy crowd,

Who fearsome stood around and gazed.

In farther field they dug a grave;

With solemn step the women moved,

And kissed the eyelids of the dead.

Apart the old man stood and looked,

In silent helplessness of grief,

Upon the dead girl's rigid form.

Lightly they raised the bodies twain,

And slowly bore them to the grave,

And laid the youthful erring pair

In the cold, bosom of the, earth.

Aleko from afar watched all,
But when the last handful of dust
Over the sleeping dead was cast,
In silence low he bent his head,
And prone on grass fell from the mound.
The old man then approached and said:
“Go, leave us now, thou haughty man!
We wild folk have no law to bind.
To torture or to punish men;
We need no sinner’s blood, or groans,
Nor can we with a murd’rer five.
Thou art not born for wild free will,
Thou wouldst thyself alone be free;
Thy voice will strike but terror here
Among the good and free in soul;
Harsh thou art and rash: so, leave us!
Farewell, and peace abide with thee!”

He spake, and now the busy crowd
The nomad camp begin to raise:
They hasten forth, and soon are lost
To view. One van alone, with roof
Of canvas torn, remains behind,
And stands upon the fatal field.
As when, before cold winter conies,
At early hour, on misty morn,
A flock of cranes will from the field
Rise up on high with eager cry,
And quick begin their southern flight,
One wretched bird, the sportsman prey,
With wounded wing that helpless hangs,
Is left behind to pine and die.
Though night came on, within the van
None cared to kindle light or fire,
And none beneath the tattered roof
Sought rest or sleep till morning broke.

EPILOGUE.

The magic charm of song divine
Brings back to life the olden days,
Writes anew on memory’s page
The record of past joys and griefs.
In the land where centuries long
The din of war not once was hushed;
Where Russian arms supremely marked

The lawful bounds of Stamboul's sway;
And where the mighty eagle shook
His proud, wide wings o'er triumphs won;
'Twas there, the wild steppe stretching round,
On borders of our ancient rule,
I met the gipsy waggon-vans,
The sons of freedom uncontrolled.
I long in idle whim pursued
Through barren waste and forest wild
The gay and lawless gipsy band.
Their modest, simple fare I shared,
And slept before their flaming fires.
I loved the noise of their loud songs.
And still the name of fair Marie
Haunts and startles my restless sleep.

And yet, with you, free nature's sons.
True happiness can ne'er be found;
And humblest tents are oft the haunt
Of troubled dreams and hopes destroyed;
And nomad camps, though pitched in wilds,
From nature ravin give no shield;
There, too, will human passions rage,
And naught protect men from their-fate.

POLTAVA



A POEM IN THREE CANTOS.

Translated by Charles Edward Turner

This narrative poem was written in 1828 and concerns Ivan Mazepa's actions in the Battle of Poltava between Sweden and Russia. The poem intertwines a love plot between Mazepa and the beautiful Maria, with an account of Mazepa's betrayal of Peter I and the Tsar's ultimate victory. The poem is celebrated for its depth of characterisation and employs the use of several different genres, inspiring the composer Tchaikovsky to compose the 1884 opera *Mazeppa*.

Poltava opens with an epigraph from Byron's 1819 ballad *Mazeppa*, which depicts the Hetman as a Romantic hero, exiled from Poland for his love affair with a married noblewoman. Pushkin follows this epigraph with a passionate dedication to an anonymous lover. The poem is divided into three cantos of equal length. The first canto opens on the estate of the nobleman Vasily Kochubei and describes Kochubei's beautiful daughter Maria, who has fallen in love with the Hetman Mazepa. As he is her godfather and much older than her, they decide to keep their love for each other secret. However, they are soon discovered and are forced to elope...



Ivan Stepanovich Mazepa (1639 – 1709), the protagonist of the poem

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The Battle of Poltava, 27 June 1709

POLTAVA. CANTO THE FIRST.

Rich and famed is Kotzubei.
Boundless and large his spacious fields,
Whereon his droves of horses graze
At their free will and all unwatched.
Around Poltava's fairest plains
Stretch far his gardens and his parks;
And in his house are treasures rare
Satins, furs and dishes silver,
Exposed to view or safely locked.
But Kotzubei, rich and proud,
Cares little for his long-maned steeds,
The tribute paid by Tartar horde,
Or lands bequeathed him by his sires;
But in Marie, his daughter fair,
The old man finds his dearest pride.

In vain you'll seek Poltava through
Her peer in loveliness and grace.
Fresh as primal flower of spring,
Warm-nurtured in the forest's shade;
As Kieff poplar tall and stately;
Her every motion like the course
Of floating swan on lonely lake,
Or deer's quick flight across the mead:
Her breasts as white as foam of sea;
Around her forehead high and broad,
Thick clustered lie her jet-black locks,
Veiling her eyes that gleam like stars;
Her lips as red as full-blown rose.
But not the charm of beauty rare,
That blooms a moment and then fades,
Had made Marie beloved by all;
But fame had crowned her with the name
Of maiden modest, pure and wise.
And rival suitors sought her hand,
The youths of Russia and Ukraine;
But from the marriage-crown, as from
The fetters of a slave she shrank.
And all had been repulsed.... but now
His messengers the Hetman sends.

No longer young, and worn with years,
With toils of war and cares of state,

But young and warm in heart, once more
Mazeppa feels the force of love.

A boyish love will fiercely burn,
Its fierceness spent, as quickly die;
The passion cools, to be renewed,
And finds each day some fancy fresh.
An old man's heart disdains to burn
With such obedient, lightsome ease,
The victim of a moment's whim:
But dulled and dimmed with thoughtful years,
The fire of passion tempered flames;
The heart is proof against its force,
And slow to burn; but once 'tis stirred,
The love born late can ne'er grow cold,
And only dies with parting breath.

It is no deer that seeks a refuge sure,
Alarmed by eagle's heavy flight;
It is a bride her chamber roams,
And, trembling, waits her parents' word.

All filled with angry discontent,
The mother comes, as one distraught,
Seizes her hand, and sharply cries:
"Now, shame befall the godless wretch!
Can such things be? No, whilst we live,
He ne'er shall wreak his foul desire!
Well fit to play the father, or
The friend to god-child young and pure,
The senseless fool, in dotage years,
Forsooth would ape the husband's part!"
Naught spake Marie. But o'er her face
A creeping pallor slowly flushed;
And cold and stiff, like lifeless corpse,
Prone on the floor the maiden fell.

She woke to life, and then once more
Her eyes were closed, nor did she speak
One single word. With busy care,
They seek to ease and cheer her soul,
To drive away her fears and grief,
To peace bring back her unhinged mind;
But all in vain. For two whole days,
Now weeping sad, now choked with sobs,
She neither spake, nor eat, nor drank,
But pale and sleepless, like a ghost

Compelled to walk, she knew no rest.
The third morn they went to seek her,
But found her chamber bare and lone.

None knew, or when, or how, Marie
Had fled. That night, a fisher said,
He heard the tramp of swiftest steeds,
The Cossack speech, and woman's voice:
Next morn the marks of eight horse-hoofs
Were traced along the dew-wet mead.

'Tis not alone the first soft down,
The curling, wavy locks of youth.
But oft the look serene of age,
The deep-streaked brow, and snowy hairs.
That win a maiden's fancy free.
And light her soul with dreams of love.

Too soon the hateful tale of shame
Assailed the ear of Kotzubei:
She had forgot disgrace and fame,
To wanton in a wretch's arms!
Nor he nor wife dared comprehend
The whispered hints of common talk.
Ere long the story was confirmed,
Made true in all its vilest shame.
Only then was bared the secret
That long had stained the maiden's soul:
Only then they learned and understood
Why wilfully she had rebelled
Against the curb of married life,
And, lonely grieving, pined away;
Or why the love of noble youths
Had been repulsed with silent scorn;
Or why at table Hetman's speech
She would drink in with greedy ear,
And when the noisy chat grew gay,
And foaming goblets flowed with wine,
And she was asked to sing, she chose
No songs save those himself had made,
When he was young, unknown to fame;
Or why, with passion strange to maid,
She loved to watch the ranged troops,
And hear the kettledrum and shouts
That hailed the golden staff and mace,
The Hetman's signs of rule and sway.

Lordly and rich is Kotzubei,
Has hosts of friends to serve his will;
Can wash away in blood this shame,
And rouse Poltava to revolt;
With sudden blow his palace storm,
And wreak a father's vengeance deep;
With sure and fatal aim can pierce —
With other thoughts his soul is stirred.

The times were ripe with troubled broil:
In threatened struggles hard and stern
The young empire must try her strength
And slowly reach her full manhood
Beneath great Peter's rule. Meanwhile,
A chast'ner cruel had been sent
To teach her how to win her fame,
And more than once the Swedish King
Had sharp and bloody lesson taught.
But, trained in durance and hard toil,
She bore the harshest blows of fate,
And grew. For thus, the hammer stout
The glass will break and forge the sword.

With glory crowned that bore no fruit,
The Swedish Charles essayed his fate.
Gainst Moscow's ancient walls he marched,
And chased the bravest Russian troops,
As whirlwind drives the valley's dust,
And low bends down the highest grass.
The route he followed was the same
By which, in later days, the lord
Of fate pursued his hurried flight.

Ukraine was mined with discontent,
And long the spark had smouldered dull.
The children of the stormy past
Nursed hope to fan a people's war;
With murmurs grim they clamoured loud
That Hetman burst their slavish chains;
And with the zeal of untried youth
Impatiently awaited Charles.
Around the aged Mazeppa rose
The rebel cry: "To arms! to arms!"
But true the Hetman old remained,
The slave and vassal of the Tsar,
He ruled as sternly as before,

And in the Ukraine guarded peace:
Seemed blind to all that passed around,
And lived and feasted at his ease.

“What is this Hetman?” snarled the young,
“He is too old, he is too weak.
Unresting years and toil have quenched
The youthful fire that once flamed bright.
With trembling hands does he presume
To wield the lordly staff and mace?
Now is the time to wage the war
On hated Moscow, freedom’s foe,
If Doroschenko, aged in years,
Or young Samoilovitch, the exile,
Palaeus brave, or Gordienko, —
Now ruled the warriors of Ukraine,
Cossacks would ne’er be left to die
In snow-wastes of a distant land;
Our troops no more would be compelled
To serve the cause of foreign rule.”

Thus murmuring, the self-willed youths
The dangers of revolt would court,
Forgot their country’s thralldom long,
Forgot Bogdan’s successful rule,
The treaties, and the sacred war,
And all the fame of ancient times.
But old men walk with heedful care,
And calculate with cautious mind
What they should do, and what forbear,
Nor will they thoughtlessly decide.
What man can sound the depth of sea
Fast bound with massive thick-set ice?
Who hope with keenest eye to pierce
The cave profound of cunning heart,
Whose thoughts are fruit of passion crushed,
And hidden lie from common view,
Whilst secretly some cherished dream,
Perchance, is ripening all unseen?
Such none can know. The Hetman false
Was most deceitful, cunning, sly,
The simpler, more sincere, he seemed.
The franker and more true in act.
He knew the art to read, to win,
To tyrannise the souls of men;
And, whilst he seemed himself to yield,

To rule their minds and guide their thoughts.
With what false faith and simpleness
Like garrulous old man, he talked
With those who were his peers in age,
Regretting happy, olden times!
With self-willed youths he freedom preached;
With discontents he darkly spake;
Shed tears of pity with the wronged;
With fools was wise and deeply grave.
A few, it may be, knew full well
That none could tame his iron will;
That he, by foul or honest blow,
Would surely thwart and crush his foe;
That never to his dying day
He pardoned or forgot a wrong;
That love of power heartless stretched
His crime-stained deeds and selfish schemes;
That naught was sacred in his eyes;
That kindness could ne'er touch his heart;
That ties of love were weak to bind;
That blood he freely shed unmoved;
That liberty he scoffed and scorned;
And that he knew no fatherland.

Long the traitor, false and cunning,
Had planned and mused a deadly plot;
But sharper, keener eyes than his,
Those of a foe, his scheme had bared.

“Nay, base kite, breeder foul of shame!”
The old man cried and gnashed his teeth,
“Thou needst not fear, I'll spare thy home,
My wretched daughter's prison-house;
Thou shalt not perish in its flames,
Nor find release in easy death
From Cossack blow. Not so, vile one!
In the hands of Moscow headsman,
In vain denials of thy guilt,
In torture, writhing on the rack,
Thou shalt curse the day, curse the hour,
When thou wert sponsor to our child;
The banquet when I filled to thee,
And loving-cup of honour drank;
The night when, like a bird of prey,
Thou durst to steal our darling dove”.

There was a time Mazeppa old
And Kotzubei were close friends;
When ties of friendship bound them fast
With household bread, and salt, and oil;
When oft their steeds, close side by side,
Had brought them safe through scudding shot:
When oft, in secret room secure,
The Hetman would a part reveal
Of his unsated, restless heart;
Would darkly hint in careful phrase
Of coming change, and treaties new,
And well-planned popular revolt.
Of this he spake, for in those days
The father of Marie was pledged
To aid and help Mazeppa's cause.
But now, the slave of passion fierce,
He had alone one aim in life:
Himself be slain, or else to slay,
His child dishonoured to revenge.

Meanwhile, his bold and daring scheme
He keeps close hidden from the world.
"I'm old and powerless", he said,
"I have one wish, the grave's sweet sleep.
The Hetman will I work no harm,
My daughter was alone to blame:
A father's blessing I will give.
Let her to heaven the crime atone,
That brought dishonour to our house,
And shamed the law of God and man".

He now, with eagle glance full keen,
Among his house-retainers seeks
A faithful, trusty servant bold,
Resolved in will, and incorrupt;
Confides his purpose to his wife:
And, filled with more than woman's spite,
The wife, all bent to strike the blow,
Will nothing hear of wise delay,
But, in the silent waste of night,
Like spirit restless and untombed,
Quick vengeance whispers in his ear,
And, with reproachful tears, entreats
Him swear to sweep to his revenge;
Until he binds himself by oath.

The blow is planned. With Kotzubei
The bold Iskra in concert acts.
And both believe: "We must succeed,
Our hated foe shall surely fall.
But where's the man, whose eager zeal,
Devoted to his country's weal,
Will tempt him brave the Hetman's rage,
And dare to lay at Peter's feet
The damning proofs of his false guilt?"

Among the Cossacks of the Don,
Whose suit the maiden had repulsed,
Was one who from his youngest years
Had loved her with the purest love.
At morn, or in the evening hour,
Along his native river's shore,
Beneath the Ukraine-cherry's shade,
He oft would wait the fair Marie,
And, waiting, pined, till one soft word
Should healing bring to his sad heart.
He knew too well, he loved in vain,
Nor ever urged a useless prayer,
Lest loss of her should make the world
A void. And when his comrades gay
Proclaimed their noisy vows of love,
He silence kept, nor spake a word
But now her name is linked with shame,
And gossip, glad to scoff the fallen,
Makes her the theme of unclean wit,
Marie still keeps her early rights,
And is to him what she had been.
And if, perchance, Mazeppa's name.
Were in his presence praised or blamed,
His face grew pale, and, lost in grief,
He sat with eyes cast down to earth.

Who rides his steed so fast and late,
With naught to guide him save the stars?
Whose steed scuds o'er the boundless steppe,
With straining neck and loosened girth?

The Cossack keeps the northern tract,
Nor will the Cossack slacken pace
In open field, or forest grove,
Or check his steed near dang'rous ford.

Like crystal clear his sword shines bright,
A bag is girded to his breast;
Nor stumbles once his mettled steed,
But gallops on with flowing mane.

The rider needs his well-filled purse,
The soldier; pride is in his sword,
The restive steed is his dear pet;
But dearer still is his fur cap.
Sooner than it, he well might lose
His steed, full purse, and shining sword;
Would fight to death in its defence,
And shed last drop of his wild blood.

What makes his cap so dear to him?
Within it lies the missive hid,
Wherein the Hetman is denounced
As traitor to the mighty Tsar.

Unconscious of the brooding storm,
And fearing naught from secret foe,
Mazeppa weaves his subtle plot.
The jesuit, his close ally,
Excites the people to revolt,
And gives him promise of the throne.
The two, like thieves, at night debate
The sum that buys each man they need;
Invent a cipher safe and sure,
That none their treason may suspect;
They fix a price on Peter's head;
With cheating oaths their vassals bribe.
An almsman... none knew whence he came...
Begins to haunt the palace-folk;
Orlick, the rebel Hetman's aid,
Oft sends him there, or calls him thence;
Where'er they come, his purchased spies
Disorder spread and discontent,
They raise the Cossacks of the Don,
Ally themselves with Bolavine,
The wild horde's love of war enflame,
And far beyond the Dnieper-falls
Sow fears of Peter's iron rule.

None scape Mazeppa's watchful eye;
From north to south, from east to west,
Both far and wide he missives sends.

By cunning threats Crimean Khans
Are set to war against Moscow.
The King of Poland follows suit;
And Turkey lends her ready hand:
Whilst Charles prepares to draw the sword.
Active, alert, he knows no rest,
Awaits the hour to strike the blow;
Nor does his will one moment slack,
As he pursues his guilty aim.

Like thunderbolt from clearest sky,
The crushing blow Mazeppa dazed;
But not for long: new plots are schemed.
He soon received from Russian lords,
Despatched to him, their country's foe,
The missive from Poltava writ,
In place of blame, caressing words,
As if he were base slander's prey!
And, plunged in troubled cares of war,
The Tsar condoled with Judas false,
And, angered, took the false for true,
The warning words unheeded left;
Resolved ere long to crush revolt
By punishment severe and stern.
With feigned grief he sends the Tsar
His cringing plea of loyal faith:
"God and man I call to witness,
For twenty years your willing slave
Has served his Tsar with truth and zeal;
And far beyond his meed enjoyed
His master's gracious love and trust.
But spite is ever rash and blind!
What gain if, in declining years,
He learns to play the traitor's part,
And blast with shame his unstained name
Was it not he with righteous scorn
Refused to aid sly Stanislas,
Refused the proffered Ukraine crown,
And, moved by duty's call, disclosed
The lying traitor's papers false?
Was it not he, by Khans approached,
Renounced alliance with the Turk?
Was it not he proved well his zeal
Against the White Tsar's banded foes,
And step by step, with brain and sword,
Thwarted their plots, and freely risked

His life to win his liege's cause?
And now they dare dishonour bring
Upon his hairs in service gray!
And who? Iskra and Kotzubei,
Who both so long had been his friends".
And, coldly shedding poisoned tears,
Triumphant in his insolence,
The wretch demands their instant death.

Whose death? Oh, man of iron will,
Whose daughter, nestling, warms thy- breast?
The sleepy whisper of remorse
Is hushed by heartless reason cold,
And thus he dulls the still, small voice:
,The stubborn fool hath freely sought
The fight unequal and foredoomed;
With hoodwinked eyes he courts defeat,
And gives the axe a keener edge.
Where can he fly with eyes close-shut?
What hope can fan his proud conceit?
Or thinks he... No! the daughter's love
Shall ne'er outbuy the father's life.
The lover to the Hetman yields,
Or else, disgraced my blood must flow!"

Alas, Marie! What fate betides thee,
Marie, Circassia's peerless bride?
Knowst thou not what deadly serpent
Now feeds and fattens on thy breast?
By what unknown, mysterious power
Art thou with strongest fetters bound,
Tied to a harsh, corrupted heart?
To whom art thou a docile slave
His flowing locks of silvered hair,
His searching eyes, deep-set and keen,
His brow well scathed with lines of thought,
His music voice that knows to charm,
To thee were dearer than world's wealth;
For them thou couldst forget and dare
A father's wrath, a mother's love;
For them prefer a couch of shame
To home's sweet care and shelter sure.
His wondrous eyes that pierce the soul
Have cast on thee their witching spell;
His pleading vows of reckless love
Have lulled the warning voice within.

As on the face of worshipped saint,
Thou lookst on him with blinded gaze,
Repaying love with love more sweet.
As others find in virtue joy,
Thy very shame thou makst thy pride,
And in thy fall hast ever lost
The priceless charm of woman's shame.

She heeds not shame nor scorn of men:
What now to her the world's repute?
The proud old man oft bends his head,
And lowly lays it on her knee;
Forgets with her the plaguing toil,
The noise and cares of outer world;
Reveals to her, the timid maid,
His hopes and fears, his wily schemes.
But, though she ne'er regrets the past,
At times, a thick and labouring cloud
Creeps o'er and darkens all her soul.
Before her rise the grievful forms
Of father stern and mother pale;
With dimming eyes she sees them there,
Abandoned in their childless age,
And thinks to hear their soft reproach.
Ah, if but now she only knew
The common talk of the Ukraine!
Alas, from her is closely kept
The secret of revenge and crime.

POLTAVA. CANTO THE SECOND.

In gloom Mazeppa sits. His mind
Is tossed with fear of failure's shame.
Marie, with wistful eyes of love,
In silence watches her old man,
Approaching softly, clasps his knee,
And sweet words whispers in his ear.
In vain: no more her love has strength
To chase away his musings dark.
Cold he lowers his absent glance
Before the kneeling maid, nor deigns
Reply to her reproaching look.
Stung to the soul, in wonder lost,
Half choked, she rises from her knees.
"Listen, Hetman", she cries, "for thee
I have forgotten home and all.
And when my soul chose thee her lord,
I had but one desire... thy love:
For that I sacrificed my all!
Nor do I now regret the past.
Rememb'rest thou how in that night,
The night I gave myself to thee,
To love me ever thou didst swear:
Tell me, then, why thy love has ceased.

MAZEPPA.

Hearken, Marie, thou art unjust.
Shake off these vain and childish fears!
Let not doubt sow poison in thy heart,
Or blinded passion idly stir
And vex thy young and ardent soul.
Believe, Marie, my love for thee
Exceeds my love of rule or fame.

MARIE.

'Tis false, and thou dost play with me
Then were we one in heart and soul;
My fond embrace thou fleest now,
My love has dull and irksome grown.
Thy days are with the elders spent,
At feasts or raid,... and I alone!
All night, close locked in room, thou art
In counsel with the almsman-priest.

If I renewal seek of love,
My sole reward is cold repulse.
And yestern eve, I learn, thou drankst
To Dulskaya... 'twas news to me...
Who is this Dulskaya?

MAZEPPA.

And art
Thou jealous, then? Is it for me,
Already aged and worn in years,
To seek from heartless courtesan
A greeting cold, or passing smile?
Shall I, the stern old man, begin
To play the skipping youngster's part,
And, sighing, lustful, sport in chains,
To win a wanton's idle glance?

MARIE.

Nay, answer me without deceit,
And answer simply: yes or no.

MAZEPPA.

To me thy peace is ever dear.
Thy will be done, and learn the truth.
With caution have we hatched the plot,
That now is ripe for quick success.
Propitious are the times; the hour
Has come to strike the fatal blow.
Deprived of freedom, robbed of fame,
Too long we bear a foreign yoke,
Now as Warsaw's humble vassals,
Now slaves to Moscow's tyrant rule.
In freedom's cause the sword we'll draw,
Nor fear I 'gainst the Tsar himself
The standard of revolt to raise.
Our plans are formed; allies are found;
And secret treaties have been drawn
Between myself and both the kings;
And soon, as fruit of battle fierce,
May be, a royal throne I'll rear.
Friends I have, whom I can trust,
Princess Dulskaya, Zалenskoi,
Together with the almsman sure;
And they will bring my scheme to end.

'Tis through their faithful hands the kings
Their orders and instructions send.
And now thou knowst our dread designs,
Art thou content? And are thy doubts
Now laid to rest?

MARIE.

Oh, dearest chuck!
Thou shalt be our new country's Tsar!
And well the royal crown shall suit
Thy snowy locks!

MAZEPPA.

Stay, soft awhile!
As yet it is not won. The storm
But lours. Who knows what fate will bring?

MARIE.

Where thou art, fear can have no place.
Thou art so mighty! Well I know,
The throne awaits thee!

MAZEPPA.

Or the block!

MARIE.

If so, with thee I share the block
Dost thou think, I will survive thee?
But no! thou wearst the kingly sign.

MAZEPPA.

Lovst thou me, Marie?

MARIE.

I? Love thee?

MAZEPPA.

But tell me, which, sire or husband
Dost thou the dearer hold?

MARIE.

Nay, friend,
And why this question? Or why delight
To torture me in vain? My home
I would forget. To them I am
A thing of shame! And who can know?...
Oh, thought to make the boldest blench!...
May be, my father has accursed me,
And for whom?

MAZEPPA.

But am I dearer
Than father? Silent still?

MARIE.

Ah, God

MAZEPPA.

Well, answer me!

MARIE.

Reply thyself!

MAZEPPA.

Suppose, thou must pronounce the wor
Which of us, thy sire or I, should die?
Whom wouldst thou doom to condign fate,
Whom wouldst thou save from sentenced death?

MARIE.

Oh! cease! Tear not my heart in twain!
Why play the tempter's part?

MAZEPPA. —
Reply!

MARIE.

Thou art all pale; thy speech is harsh;
Look not so fierce! All, all, I am

Prepared to give. Believe, I lie not;
Though thus to speak is still a crime!
Enough!

MAZEPPA. —

Remember well, Marie,
The words thou hast so freely spoke.

Calm and soft is the Ukraine night.
No cloud to dull the wide expanse;
The stars are shining full and bright;
No breeze to wake the drowsy dream,
Nor scarce a breath that cares to fret
The sleep of silver-poplar leaves.
On town and Hetman's gardens gay,
And on the hoary castle-tower
The moon her tranquil light unveils.
And all around is hushed and still,
But all within is noise and haste;
Near lattice window in the tower,
Deep sunk in grief and gloomy thought,
Sits Kotzubei, bound in chains,
Watching the peaceful sky above.

To-morrow morn he's doomed to die
For him the scaffold has no dread,
And life has naught he need regret;
Nor fears he death, the wished-for sleep,
The sleep that rests the worried flesh.
But, righteous God! to be thus gagged,
And crushed beneath a villain's feet,
Like some brute beast to slaughter led!
The Tsar to make him Hetman's game,
That he, false traitor to the Tsar,
May boast and triumph in his fall!
To lose his life, and with it fame!
To bring his friend to shame and death,
And hear him, guiltless, curse his name!
To meet his foe's triumphant look,
As when he lays his head on block!
Be thrown into the arms of death,
Ere he bequeath to kinsman sure
The sacred task of vengeance keen!

Poltava dear in dream he sees;
Its wonted group of household friends,

The happy days of wealth and ease,
The songs his daughter loved to sing,
The ancient home where he was born,
The friendly scene of all his joys,
Where he had known hard toil and sleep,
And all that he had cast away,
For what?
In rusty lock is heard
The grating key, and, roused from dreams,
The wretched captive thinks: 'Tis he,
My guide, along the path of blood,
To hold up high the cross divine,
Tho bearer of the keys of heaven,
The healer of the wounded soul,
The minister serene of Christ,
Who suffered death and ransomed us;
The sacred gifts immaculate
He brings, that, strengthened and confirmed,
I may the bolder march to death,
Nor fail to reach immortal bliss.

With softened heart old Kotzubei
Before the Ruler of the world
Prepares to pour his heart in prayer;
But 'tis no gentle anchorite
Has come with words of pardon free:
The hated Orlick stands before him.
And o'er his face a loathing comes,
As he demands with proudful scorn:
"What wilt thou here, oh man of crime?
What moves Mazeppa to disturb
The last remains of my sad life?"

ORLICK.

One secret more thou must divulge.

KOTZUBEI.

I have replied: and so, depart,
Leave me in peace! —

ORLICK.

One answer more
Our lord demands.

KOTZUBEI.

And what demand?
I have revealed, acknowledged all
That thou wouldst know. The charges made
Were all a lie. I'm skilled and sly
In weaving plots. The Hetman's right
What more canst thou require?

ORLICK.

We know,
Riches thou hadst and stores untold:
These stores in slyly chosen spots,
In thy village of Dianka,
Thou hast concealed and hidden kept.
This wealth, in forfeit of thy crime,
Is due to Cossack's common fund.
Such is the law. That law obey.
No more delay, but tell us quick
Where are the treasures thou hast hid?

KOTZUBEI.

Well, thou art right! Three treasures were
The pride and joy of my whole life.
The first of these my honour was,
And this the rack hath robbed me of.
The second none can give me back,
The unstained name of daughter dear,
That day and night I, tending, watched;
Mazeppa hath that name defouled.
The third and last I guard mine own,
My third and last is... vengeance just;
And that I take with me to God!

ORLICK.

Cease, old man, these idle ravings!
Think, on verge of life thou standest,
Proud defiance ill befits thee,
No time to trifle. Answer give,
Or else thou feelst the torture sharp!
Thy moneys, where?

KOTZUBEI.

Recreant slave!
Cease, I pray, thy questionings vain.
And when I lie within my grave,
Then go, thy lord Mazeppa seek,
And with grim fingers steeped in blood
Count o'er my treasures and my wealth,
Break ope my unprotected vaults,
My plundered home with fire destroy!
Methinks, 'twere well to take Marie,
She will my secrets all betray,
And show you where each treasure lies.
Do what thou wilt, but in God's name
Leave me, and let me die in peace!

ORLICK.

Thy moneys, where are they? Say, quick
Thou wilt not speak? Thy moneys, where?
Or bitter shall thy tortures be!
Think well, the hidden wealth disclose!
Say, where; or rack shall make thee tell!
Once more, speak, or else... What ho, there!

The headsman crossed the cell.

This night,
Where is the Hetman? What does he?
How sting of conscience hope to still?
In the chamber of the happy maid,
Blest in her ignorance of ill,
Beside his sleeping godchild's couch,
Mazeppa sits with head bent low,
A prey to care that gives no rest.
Dark thoughts flit chasing through his mind,
Still darker than the thoughts they chase.
"This self-willed, dotard fool must die!
The hour of our success draws near,
And stern must be the Hetman's power
Wherewith he should invest himself;
Remorseless must the Hetman crush
Who would oppose. Without appeal
The bold informer and his tool
Must die!" By hap, he casts his glance
On Marie's couch. "Oh God! and what
Will be with her when first she learns
The sentence dread has been fulfilled?"

As yet her soul is undisturbed,
But it no longer can be kept
From her. The headsman's fatal blow
Like thunder-stroke will echo loud
Throughout the whole Ukraine. The talk
Of prating world will reach her ears.
Alas, I see, the man, ordained
By fate to lead the world's big strife,
Alone should face the raging storm,
-Unhampered by a woman's love.
The restive steed and timid deer
Must ne'er be harnessed to one car.
This I incautiously forgot,
And now must pay the heavy price
Of my mad fault. For, all that has
Worth, all that lends to life a charm,
The blameless maiden brought to me,
To me, a stern old man... and I,
In what can I reward her love?"
Fondly he gazes where she lies,
Cradled and stilled in softest dream.
How sweet her sleep of trusting faith!
A happy smile her lips half part,
With fullest life her white breasts heave
But to-morrow?... And with a groan
He rose, and, with quick muffled steps,
Reeled blindly forth into the air.

Calm and soft is the Ukraine night.
No cloud to dull the wide expanse:
The stars are shining full and bright;
No breeze to wake the drowsy dream,
Nor scarce a breath that cares to fret
The sleep of silver-poplar leaves.
Mazeppa's soul is filled with strange
Conflicting thoughts. The stars of night
Look down like keen accusing eyes,
And haunt him with their mocking glance.
The poplars hug their branches close,
And shake their tops, and whisper low
To list'ning boughs their sentence stern.
The balmy air of summer night
Chokes him, like damp of prison cell.

Sudden, as from the castle near,
He hears a cry... a speechless moan.

Is it the coinage of mad brain,
The owlet's hoot, or wild beast's growl,
Or tortured groan? He cannot tell.
But he is powerless, the slave
Of some strong will, and in reply
Shouts back the wail... his fierce, loud cry
He raised when in the battle's din,
With Zabel, or with Hamelei,
Or oft with him... with Kotzubei,
He rushed to meet the foe's wild charge.

The first faint streaks of russet dawn
Have bathed the sky in new-born light;
The vales, and hills, and meadows gleam;
The tufted groves and rippling streams
Awake to sing their morning hymn,
And summon men to daily toil.

Still lying on her couch, Marie
In slumber dozing, thinks she hears
In her light sleep some one approach,
And touch her foot with timid hand.
She wakes, but quickly with a smile
Her eyes are closed, as from the glare
Of day they shrink. And in her sleep
She stretches and puts out her hand,
As languidly she murmurs low,
"Mazeppa!" But a voice, not his,
Replies, and, trembling, she looks up,
And what is it she gazes on?
Before her stands her mother.

MOTHER.

Hush!
Or else we are undone! This night
I've hither stolen, and am come
With one, last, sad, beseeching prayer.
To-day he dies. And thou alone
Canst touch or turn their cruel hearts.
Thy father save!

MARIE.

Whose father save?
Who dies?

MOTHER.

Or can it be, till now
Thou hast been ignorant?... But no!
Thou livst with him, art in the world,
Must know how dread the Hetman's sway,
How all his foes before him fall,
And how the Tsar puts trust in him..
I see too well, thy ruined home
Thou hast forgot for Hetman's love!
The sentence dread hath been pronounced,
The death-decree is being read,
The axe is raised above his head,
And thou art sleeping at thy ease!
I see, we are but strangers now.
Marie, arise, run, kiss his feet,
Our angel be, thy father save!
One look from thee will stay the wretch,
And turn aside the falling axe.
Be earnest, urgent in thy prayers!
Thinkst thou the Hetman will refuse?
It is for him thou hast renounced
The claims of honour, home, and God!

MARIE.

Alas, what do I see and hear?
Mazeppa... father... death... and here
My mother, praying, kneels before me!...
Nay, nay, my fancy plays me false,
I must be mad!

MOTHER.

God be with thee!
'Tis neither madness nor a dream!
It cannot be, thou dost not know;
Thy father, wounded in his pride,
Unused to bear a daughter's shame,
And thirsting quick and sharp revenge,
Betrayed the Hetman to the Tsar.
Knowst thou not that, racked with pain,
He hath accused himself of false
Intrigues 'gainst innocence and truth?
That he, the prey of justice blind,
Lies at the mercy of his foe?

This day, before the Cossack troops,
Unless just God should intervene,
He dies the death of public shame.
Within this castle's prison-tower
Bound and chained he lies.

MARIE.

Oh God! oh God!
Tis true?... this day... my father dies?
And on her couch the maid down drooped,
And backward fell, like some cold corpse.

The gay caps mingle in the sun;
The spears shine bright; the drums beat loud;
The Hetman's well-trained troops march forth
To take their rank in ordered file.
With throbbing hearts the crowds swarm round.
The road, that winds like serpent's tail,
Is filled with teeming, surging throngs.
Aloft in square the scaffold glooms,
And on its boards the headsman struts,
Rubbing his hands, his victim waits;
As 'twere a toy, from time to time,
Plays with his heavy sharp-edged axe,
Or with the mob exchanges jest.
A noise confused is heard around
Of laughter, railing, murmurs, cries.
A sudden shout is raised, and all
Are hushed, and through the silence deep
Is heard the tramp of horses' hoofs.
By body-guards surrounded close,
The Hetman on his rampant steed,
With gay and gallant suite, appears.
Along the road to Kieff straight
Slow trails a cart. All eyes are turned,
And eager watch its slow approach.
Within it sits old Kotzubei,
At peace with God and erring man,
Full strong in faith that makes men bold.
Resigned and pale sits Iskra near,
Like lamb that is led forth to die.
The cart draws up. The full-voiced quire
With hymn of prayer the calm air fills.
Thick clouds of incense mount on high,
As silent all, with head uncovered,

Pray for those condemned to die.
And they about to suffer pray
Their foes may pardoned be, and, slow
Descending, climb the fatal steps.
With sign of cross and prayer for all
He leaves behind, the old man lays
His snow-white head upon the block.
A silence dead creeps o'er the crowd;
The axe is raised; a moment's flash,
And severed falls the head below:
A smothered groan the silence breaks.
With gruesome thud a second falls,
And stains the thirsty grass with blood.
Proud of his work, the headsman grim,
Seizing the still wet tufts of hair,
With arm all bared and far outstretched,
Dangles the heads before the mob.
And all is done. The fickle crowds
Break up, and to their homes disperse;
In groups discuss among themselves
The petty cares of daily life;
And soon the square is emptied quite.
Along the road with gay crowds covered,
Two women quickly push their way.
Foot-sore, thick stained with clinging dust,
Possessed with fear, they hurry on,
Eager to reach the fated spot.
"You are too late", a peasant cries,
And points with finger to the place,
Where now half-torn the scaffold yawns.
Robed in black a priest is praying,
And two Cossacks have piled a truck
With coffins made of roughest oak.

Alone, Mazeppa, grim and stern,
Aloof from his bold troopers rides.
An unfilled void torments his heart,
And earth and heaven alike are dull.
Not one so rash to dare come near,
Not one who cares a word exchange.
All in foam his black steed bears him,
And, reaching home, Marie he calls.
His serfs are summoned. In reply,
Unmeaning words they stammer forth.
Against his will a prey to fear,
He hastens to her room, but finds

The maiden's chamber lone and bare.
Madly he roams the garden's length,
Searches each bush and beats each brake,
Around the lake each crevice pries:
But all in vain; no trace he finds.
And now he calls his troopers sure,
Picked men who long have served him well;
They hurry forth on panting steeds,
The wild chase-cry resounds afar.
As here and there the brave youths rush,
Nor leave a hidden nook unsearched.

A hundred roads are quickly scoured:
But no Marie, alas, returns!
No one has known, and none can tell,
The secret of her hurried flight.
In silent rage Mazeppa grieves;
His vassals shrink from him in fear;
His poisoned breast within him burns;
And closely locked he bars his room,
And, staring at the vacant couch,
Speechless he sits the whole night long,
Stung with pains that are not of this world.
Next morn, the slaves he had despatched
Return, their errand unfulfilled.
Their tired steeds can scarcely move. Girths.
Bridle and hoofs, and housings gay,
Are drenched in foam, or stained with blood,
Broken, or lost upon the road.
But none has brought his master stern
Of maiden news. No trace they found,
And she, it seemed, had disappeared,
As though the world had ne'er known her.
The mother fled her house of woe,
And begged her bread from stranger hands.

POLTAVA. CANTO THE THIRD.

Though plunged in griefs that are his own,
Not less the ruler of Ukraine
His bold and daring scheme pursues.
True to his plans he stands resolved,
And with the Swedish King concludes
A secret pact against the Tsar.
Meanwhile, the better to deceive
The watchful eyes of hostile spies,
Some leeches wise he quickly calls,
As on the bed of sickness feigned
He groans and whines for instant help.
The passions, toils and cares of war,
The woes and weakness of old age,
Death's harbingers, have laid him low.
But he, no more the dupe of life,
The passing world is glad to leave.
Religious rites he would observe,
And bids his trusty priest to come,
And on his hoary locks is poured
The healing oil of balm and peace.

But time goes by. In vain Moscow
The threatened guests each hour awaits,
And midst the graves of her old foes
For Swedish slain prepares a place.
A sudden change of march is made,
And Swedish troops invade Ukraine.

The day has come, and from his bed
Mazeppa rose, this suff'rer weak,
This living corpse, who yesternight
The last, sad rites demurely served.
But now, the rival of the Tsar
To Desna hotly makes his way,
With ardent eyes before his troops
His sword high waves and boldly rides.
All signs of age he now throws off,
Erect, and strong, and young, appears,
Like prelate who, in years well struck,
Is called to wear the Papal crown.
The wingèd news spreads far and wide:
"The Hetman false has humbly laid
At feet of Charles his golden mace."

The fire quick catches, and the flames
Of civil war burst forth.

But who
Shall tell the Tsar's fierce rage and wrath?
The churches echo ban and curse;
The hangman burns Mazeppa's bust;
In noisy council's hot debate
Another chief the Cossacks choose;
And from their place of exile far
The kin of Iskra and his chief
Are summoned back. With them the Tsar
Bewails their sires' unrighteous fate,
And subtly whets them to revenge.
And old Palaeus, horseman bold,
His youth renewed, once more returns,
The camp to join and fight the foe.
The Ataman, the bold Tchetchel,
Is seized and cast in dungeon deep.
And thou, who threwst away a crown
For warrior's helm, thy fated day
Is near; Poltava's ancient walls
At last thou seest from afar.

And now, the Tsar his troops has massed,
Wave after wave succeeding fast,
And in the centre of the vale
The two opposing camps are pitched.
Not once in skirmish bold repulsed,
From early years made drunk with blood,
With all a warrior's joy Charles sees
At length the wished-for day arrive,
When he and his dread foe, the Tsar,
In battle face to face shall meet.
He has his wish, but finds himself
Confronted with no runaways,
As when he fought at Narva, but
With soldiers well accoutred, brave,
Obedient, and self possessed,
With sure and trusty weapons armed.

"To-morrow morn we battle give!"
He thus resolved; and all was still
Throughout the camp, save where two friends
Together whispered converse held.

MAZEPPA.

Nay, Orlick, I too late perceive
What unwise rashness we have shown;
Bold was our scheme, but badly planned;
Nor can we hope achieve our end,
But rather failure and disgrace.
Our error naught can now redeem.
This Swedish King I have mistook;
A stripling rash who with success,
Of course, can two, three battles wage,
And from the field will straightway ride
And sup at Dresden with the foe;
Will with a jest defiance take;
Or, like some common Russian scout,
Prowl leaguered camp at night, and come
On Cossacks sitting round the fire,
And shot for shot with them exchange.
But strife to wage with Russian Tsar
Is not reserved for such as he.
Like troops, he would manoeuvre fate
And make it march to sound of drum.
Self-willed he is, impatient, blind,
Light-minded, and a braggart rare;
Tuts trust in what he calls his star;
Against new forces of the foe
Can only pit successes past,
And so will get his wings close clipt.
It shames me that in my old age
I have been gulled by this war-crow,
Been blinded by his airs, seduced
By his good luck and future hope,
As though I were some ninny lass.

ORLICK.

‘Tis wiser wait the fight’s result;
The fitting moment has not come
With Peter friendship to renew:
Our error yet we can repair.
From victor’s hand, there is no doubt,
The Tsar will terms of peace accept.

MAZEPPA.

Nay, ‘tis too late: the Russian Tsar
And I can ne’er be friends again.
My fate was long ago foredoomed,

From ancient times our feud begins.
At Azoff once, the whole night long,
In royal tent the savage Tsar
Kept noisy feast, "he goblets, filled
With sparkling wine, went gaily round,
In suit with freest jest and speech.
Some ill-considered word I spoke;
The younger guests looked on with awe;
The Tsar grew hot with wrath, down dashed
His cup, and seized me by the beard,
And swore to vent his sov'reign rage.
My fruitless anger I subdued,
But in my heart I vowed revenge.
As warm her child a mother keeps
Within her womb, that vow I nursed.
The hour has struck. Till his last day,
Of me remembrance will he keep.
To him I am an eyesore keen,
A canker in his crown's fresh leaves.
His herited domains, his life's
Best, dearest hour he would forego,
Once more Mazeppa by the beard
To hold. But let us not lose hope.
The morn decides who victor proves.

He ceased, and soon the traitor false
Closed fast his heavy eyes in sleep.
The russet sky is streaked with dawn.
Along the vales, along the hills,
The rumbling cannons raise thick clouds
Of dust, that high ascend and dim
The first, faint rays of early morn.
The troops close up in serried ranks;
Bayonets cold are shouldered fast;
Out-skirmishers take up their post;
And bullets speed, and shots whiz by.
The favoured sons of mighty war,
The Swedes, break through the trenches' fire;
The eager horsemen push their way;
Behind them march the men on foot;
Whose firm, unbroken columns give
Support to each bold, forward move.
The field of battle dubious
Is now the scene of noisy din;
And fickle fortune turns her wheel,
And on our arms her first smile throws.

Their troops before our fire retreat,
And in confusion fall away.
Now, Rosen through the defile flees,
And Schliepenbach, the rash, submits.
We press the Swedes from post to post,
The glory of their flag now wanes;
The Lord of Hosts protects our cause
And crowns our arms with full success.

‘Twas then was heard, as from on high,
A mighty voice, that thundered loud:
“On, children, on, and God with us!”
Surrounded by his heroes leal,
He sallies forth. His eyes gleam fierce;
His face is stern, and terror strikes.
Quickly he moves. His noble form,
Dark-louring like God’s thunder-storm,
Destruction breathes. The steed is brought,
And restive, but submissive, stands;
Scenting afar the smoke and fire,
It trembling darts its eyes askance,
And proudly bears its rider bold,
Who seemed to know his fiery steed.
Beneath the burning midday sun
Awhile the raging battle slacks,
Though Cossacks still keep up the fire.
But now the troops are drawn in line,
The trumpet, flute, and drum are hushed,
From hills no longer cannon flash
Across the plain their hungry roar;
And far around the welkin rings
With deaf’ning shouts and loud hurrah,
The soldiers’ welcome to their Tsar.

Before his troops he quickly moves
In all his might and martial pride,
As with keen glance the field he scours.
Behind him ride, in compact crowd,
The boast and glory of his age,
In all the changes of blind fate,
In all the toils of rule and war,
His fellow-workmen and his mates:
Brave Scheremeteff, honour’s theme,
And Bruss, and Bauer, and Repnine,
And Menschikoff, kind fortune’s child.
The prop and pillar of the realm.

Meanwhile, before the ranged ranks
Of his best troops and heroes brave,
In litter borne *by* faithful slaves,
Pale in face and motionless,
With bandaged arm, King Charles appears.
Around him crowd his brilliant suite.
Deep plunged in thought, his troubled face
Is marked with signs of anxious care;
As though the combat he desired
Was now a thing of fear and doubt.
And, like a man compelled by fate,
He feebly waves his tired hand,
Begins the fight he long had planned,
And moves his troops against the foe.

Our men across the smoking plain
March quick to front the fierce assault,
The shock of great Poltava's day!
Amidst a shower of red-shot hail,
That strikes and breaks the wall of flesh.
Each time a rank falls out, fresh rank
Supplies its place, and heavy clouds
Of horsemen, scudding to the sound
Of clattering arms, in maddened fray,
Around them deal fast blows of death.
The fiery balls fly here and there,
And, spreading death, heap pile on pile
Of heroes slain, or soil dig up,
Or hissing fall in streams of blood.
The mingled foes strike, hew, and wound:
And naught is heard save beat of drum,
The roar of cannon, cries of rage,
The heavy tramp, and dying groan;
And death and hell hold feast unchecked.

Amidst the terror and dismay,
Unmoved the leaders calmly watch
The progress of the doubtful fight,
Pursue the tactics of their troops,
Foresee the ruin and the conquest,
And oft in whispers converse hold.
But who may be the warrior gray
That near the Moscow Tsar close stands?
By two Cossacks held up, his heart
Once more with youthful zeal burns fierce,

As with the soldier's practised eye
He views the busy scene around.
Grown old and weak in exile long,
No longer can he leap on steed;
No longer will Palaeus see
At his brief summons Cossacks haste.
But wherefore flash his eyes so keen,
And with dark rage, as with night-mist,
His aged face is mantled deep?
What passion is it moves him thus?
Or does he through the battle smoke
Mazeppa spy, and at the sight
His years decrepit vainly curse?
Mazeppa, thoughtful and disturbed,
Surveys the field, as round him press
A crowd of mutinous Cossacks,
Kinsmen, elders, body-troopers.
A sudden shot! The old man turned.
In Voinarovsky's close-clenched hand
The barrel of his gun still smoked.
A few steps made, the young Cossack
With bleeding wound from saddle rolled.
The steed, all bathed in foam and dust,
Scenting freedom, wildly snorted,
And soon was lost in thickest smoke.
On Hetman rushed the Cossack fierce
Across the field, with sword in hand,
His eyes afire with madman's rage.
The old man met his eager foe,
And would a question put. But ere
He could reply, the brave Cossack
Had breathed his last. His glazed eyes
Still bore the glance of hate, and seemed
To seek revenge on Russia's foe.
One instant ere he closed his eyes,
His face grew bright with sudden gleam,
As with a sigh he softly lisped
The name "Marie", and, smiling, died.

Each moment nears the happy hour;
Our men push on, the Swedes retire;
We charge, and they disrouted flee;
Headlong pursuit our horsemen give.
The swords grow blunt with slaughter's work,
The plain is covered thick with dead,
As with a swarm of locusts black.

There is high feast in Peter's tent:
Right proud and keen, and bright his glance.
And all within is joy and pomp,
As, to his troopers' noisy shouts,
He welcomes one and all his guests,
Pays honour to the captive Swedes
In goblets crowned with nine salutes,
His teachers in the art of war.

But where the first and honoured guest,
Our chiefest teacher and most feared,
Whose rage and long nursed hate this day
The victor of Poltava stilled?
And where Mazeppa, Judas false,
Has refuge found and fled in fright?
Among the guests where is the King,
Or why has block the traitor spared?

The ill-starred mates of common flight,
The King and Hetman, breathless urge
Their steeds across the barren steppe.
The dread of shame and danger near
Inspire the King with novel force;
No more he cares for aching wound.
With head bent low, he hurries on,
Outstrips with ease the swift pursuit,
And gallops fierce, that of his men
But few have strength to keep the pace.

Abreast with him the Hetman rides,
And anxious is the glance that scans
The wide expanse that stretches far:
Before them lies a farmstead bared
Why grows Mazeppa pale with fear?
Why hurries he, as panic-struck,
And, spurring steed, fast dashes by?
Or does the sight of yard and home,
And garden waste, and open gate
That leads into the field, awake
Within his heart an aching dream
Of wrongful deed and crime most foul?
And does the ravisher once more
Behold that cloistered shrine,
That home, the scene of mirth and joy,
Where he, his heart unlocked with wine.
Surrounded by the household gay,

And welcome guest, was wont with jest
At midday feast to gladden all?
Is this the house, the refuge sure,
Where once the angel unstained dwelt?
Is this the garden, whence that night
The maiden pure he lured across
The steppe?... Too well he knew the place!

The shades of night fall o'er the plains
Along the Dnieper's grassy shore;
Among the rocks they lightly sleep,
The foes of Russia and her Tsar.
The hero's sleep is lulled with dreams,
And he forgets Poltava's shame.
But broken is Mazeppa's sleep,
His gloomy soul finds no repose,
And in the silence of the night
His name is whispered. Starting up,
With frightened gaze he looks around,
And, trembling as beneath the fall
Of sharpened axe, before him sees
A silent form, with finger raised.
And there, with loose, dishevelled hair,
With bright and glittering, sunken eyes,
In garments torn, full pale and wan,
A moon-ray falling on her, stands...
"Or do I dream?... Marie!... Tis thou?"

MARIE.

Hush, hush, my darling! But just now,
Have father, mother, closed their eyes:
So, wait... or they may hear us... hush!

MAZEPPA.

Marie, ah poor Marie, I pray,
Recall thy thoughts! What dost thou here?

MARIE.

Listen the trick they have dared play,
The juggling trick they have devised!
Last night she came with warning words
That father had been done to death,
And secretly an old white head
She showed to me. Oh, righteous God!

Where can we fly from man's deceit?
For, think, the head she brought with her
Bore not the shape of human skull,
Was like a wolf's... You see, the kind
She is! With cheating lies like these
She thought to trick and gull her child:
Now, shame on her to torture me!
And why? That I might courage lack
With thee, my love, this night to flee:
Can people be so base?

In dread,
Her lover looks on her wild face;
But she, distempered fancy's slave,
Quick whispers: "I remember all,
The field... the folk in dresses gay...
The crowd... the bodies warm, but dead...
I went with her to see the show...
But where wert thou?... And why, alone,
Apart from thee, at night, I fled?
But let us quick return, 'tis late!...
But ah! My head is ill, my brain
Is racked with empty, idle dreams;
Strange! I took thee for another...
Nay, nay, I pray thee, touch me not!
Thy glare is cruel, cold as ice,
And ugly! But he was beautiful:
His eyes were soft with kindest love,
His words were fair and gracious,
His beard was whiter than the snow:
But thine is clotted with dry blood!"
And with a shriek of laughter mad,
And swifter than the hunted deer,
She wildly burst his hold, ran forth,
And in the silent waste was lost.

The last thin shades of night disperse,
The east begins to redden bright;
In Cossack tents the fires burn clear,
And busy hands the meal prepare.
Along the banks the body guards
The steeds unbridled lead to drink,
And Charles awakes. "'Tis time!" he cries,
"Arise, Mazeppa, dawn is near!"
But long the Hetman has not slept;
His heart is drear, the choking grief

Mounts high, his breath comes thick and hard:
Silent he sets the saddle right,
And he and Charles pursue their flight.
At last they cross the border-point;
The Hetman's eyes are dimmed with tears,
As home and country fade from view.

THE BRONZE HORSEMAN



A POEM IN TWO CANTOS.

Translated by Charles Edward Turner

Written in 1833 while Pushkin was staying on his family's estate at Boldino, this famous ballad concerns the equestrian statue of Peter the Great in Saint Petersburg. It is widely considered to be the poet's most successful narrative poem, having a lasting impact on Russian literature. Due solely to the influence of the poem, the statue is now simply known as the 'Bronze Horseman'.

Owing to censorship, only the Prologue was allowed to be published during the poet's lifetime, appearing in 1834 under the title *Petersburg. An extract from a poem*. The narrative poem was first published in full in 1837, immediately following Pushkin's death. *The Bronze Horseman* was printed in the journal *Sovremennik*, which Pushkin had established the year before. Even then, the censors demanded certain alterations to the text.

Divided into three sections, with a short introduction and two cantos, *The Bronze Horseman* opens with a part-fictional history of Saint Petersburg. In the first two stanzas, Peter the Great stands at the edge of the River Neva in an uninhabited area, where he conceives the idea of a city that will threaten the Swedes and open a 'window to the West'.



The Bronze Horseman, Saint Petersburg

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Peter the Great envisioning Saint Petersburg by the River Neva

THE BRONZE HORSEMAN. PROLOGUE.

On the waste shore of raving waves
He stood, with high and dread thoughts filled,
And gazed afar. Before him rolled
The river wide, a fragile bark
Its tortuous path slow making.
Upon the moss-grown banks and swamps
Stood far asunder smoky huts,
The homes of Finnish fishers poor;
Whilst all around, a forest wild,
Unpierced by misty-circled sun,
Murmured loud.
Gazing far, he thought:
From hence we can the Swede best threat;
Here must I found a city strong,
That shall our haughty foe bring ill;
It is by nature's law decreed,
That here we break a window through,
And boldly into Europe look,
And on the sea with sure foot stand;
By water path as yet unknown,
Shall ships from distant ports arrive,
And far and wide our reign extend.
A hundred years have passed, and now,
In place of forests dark and swamps,
A city new, in pomp unmatched,
Of Northern lands the pride and gem.
Where Finnish fisher once at eve,
Harsh nature's poor abandoned child,
From low-sunk boat was wont his net
With patient toil to cast, and drag
The stream, now stretch long lines of quays,
Of richest granite formed, and rows
Of buildings huge and lordly domes
The river front; whilst laden ships
From distant quarters of the world
Our hungry wharfs fresh spoils supply;
And needful bridge its span extends,
To join the stream's opposing shores;
And islets gay, in verdure clad,
Beneath the shade of gardens laugh.
Before the youthful city's charms
Her head proud Moscow jealous bends,
As when the new Tsaitza young

The widowed Empress lowly greets.

I love thee, work of Peter's hand!
I love thy stern, symmetric form;
The Neva's calm and aueenly flow
Betwixt her quays of granite-stone,
With iron tracings richly wrought;
Thy nights so soft with pensive thought,
Their moonless glow, in bright obscure.
When I alone, in cosy room,
Or write or read, night's lamp unlit;
The sleeping piles that clear stand out
In lonely streets, and needle bright,
That crowns the Admiralty's spire;
When, chasing far the shades of night,
In cloudless sky of golden pure,
Dawn quick usurps the pale twilight,
And brings to end her half-hour reign.
I love thy winters bleak and harsh;
Thy stirless air fast bound by frosts;
The flight of sledge o'er Neva wide,
That glows the cheeks of maidens gay.
I love the noise and chat of balls;
A banquet free from wife's control,
Where goblets foam, and bright blue flame
Darts round the brimming punch-bowl's edge.
I love to watch the martial troops
The spacious Field of Mars fast scour;
The squadrons spruce of foot and horse;
The nicely chosen race of steeds,
As gaily housed they stand in line,
Whilst o'er them float the tattered flags;
The gleaming helmets of the men
That bear the marks of battle-shot.
I love thee, when with pomp of war
The cannons roar from fortress-tower;
When Empress-Queen of all the North
Hath given birth to royal heir;
Or when the people celebrate
Some conquest fresh on battle-field;
Or when her bonds of ice once more
The Neva, rushing free, upheaves,
The herald sure of spring's rebirth.
Fair city of the hero, hail!
Like Russia, stand unmoved and firm!
And let the elements subdued

Make lasting peace with thee and thine.
Let angry Finnish waves forget
Their bondage ancient and their feud;
Nor let them with their idle hate
Disturb great Peter's deathless sleep!

It was a day of fear and dread,
In book of memory still writ.
And now, for you, my friends, the tale
Of that day's woe I will begin;
And mournful will my story be.

THE BRONZE HORSEMAN. CANTO THE FIRST.

O'er Peter's cloud-wrapt city hung
November's autumn cold and mist.
With noisy splash of angry wave
The Neva chafed her granite fence,
As one, confined to bed with pain,
Will peevish toss from side to side.
The hour was late, and it was dark,
The rain beat hard on window-pane,
The wind with mournful howl roared loud,
When young Evjenie bade his friends
Adieu, and homeward turned his steps.
Evjenie is our hero's name,
A name that lightly falls in verse,
And one my pen is used to write.
No interest his surname has,
Though in the olden times gone by,
May be, it was in high repute;
We meet with it in Karamsin,
Like other once familiar names;
But now 'tis lost and all unknown.
In district called Kolumna lived
Our hero, who in office served.
His chiefs he feared, but patient bore
Death of relations dear and near,
Or world's neglect of service past.

Evjenie reached his home, uphung
His cloak, undressed, and went to bed.
But long it was before he slept;
A host of cares possessed his brain.
He thought... of what? That he was poor
And hard must toil, if he would bare
Existence get, in freedom live,
Or have his neighbour's good repute.
Wished that God had but endowed him
With greater wit, or better, wealth;
For in our world are those who have
No wit, and never think to work,
And still contrive to live in ease;
Whilst he must drudge and slave, or starve.
And then, our hero heard the storm,
With fury lashed, still louder rage,
And thought the bridges soon across

The Neva wide would be removed.
And he for two or three whole days
Could of Parasha have no news.

Such were his thoughts. And all that night
His heart within him ached. He prayed
The dreary wind would cease to howl,
The rain not beat on window-pane
So angrily.

At length sleep closed
His heavy eyes. And now, the last
Dark scattered clouds of night began
To pale, as dawned the day of doom
And woe.

All night the Neva wild
Had sought escape in open sea,
Till 'gainst the storm's mad rage to strive
She ceased, her strength completely broke.
At morn, along the river's shores,
The people thronged and watched with awe
The angrily splash, the high-tossed foam,
And crested tops of heaving waves.
But stronger roared, with scream and wail,
The furious blast that river forced
Retreat, and break its confines low,
And drown the isles beneath its waves.
More fiercely still the storm-winds raged,
Insulted Neva shrieked with pain,
Its waters boiled and thundered high,
And, like wild beast escaped from cage.
Its ruin wide o'er city spread.
Before it fled the crowds, and all
Was one waste sea. The waters poured,
And forced their way through cellar-caves,
Beat down the rails of each canal,
Till Petropol, like Triton, stood
Plunged deep, breast-high, in ocean's storm.

As in a leaguered town, the waves,
Like thieves, through windows burst, and sterns
Of boats in shivers broke the panes;
The awnings frail of fish-barks drenched,
The roofs and wreck of ruined homes,
The shopman's unsold stores and stock,
The year's hard savings of the poor,

The bridges from their moorings wrenched,
And coffins loose from churchyards torn,
Swam down the streets.

The maddened folk
In ruin's work God's wrath beheld,
And, trembling, ills yet greater waited,
For all was lost, nor could they hope
Fresh homes, or food, or help to find.

In that year of woe and horror,
Tsar Alexander ruled in fame.
From palace window, sick at heart
And grieved, he looked, and muttered low:
"Before dread Nature, might of Tsars
Is naught and vain!" And long he sate,
And, sobbing, watched the ruin spread.
The city squares were changed to lakes,
The streets in broad streams swam, and like
Abandoned isle the palace stood.
I then spake the Tsar.... From point to point,
Along the near and distant streets
Two tried and trusty lords, in boat
Began to make their dang'rous way
To save the wretches lost in fear,
And drowning in their battered homes.

Meanwhile in Petroff's gloomy square,
Where the new, huge building rises,
And where, on either side of porch,
There stands, on pedestal high reared,
With upraised paw, as large as life,
A lion guardian, on the watch:
Upon the brute's wide marble back,
Without a cap, hands clasped round mane,
Evjenie sate, all pale and still.
And if his cheeks were wan with fright,
It was not I'or himself he feared.
He had not seen the thirsty waves
Loud howling rise above his feet;
Nor felt the torrents lash his face;
Nor heard the sharp, grim shriek of wind,
That caught and tossed his cap away.
His eyes despairingly were fixed
On one far spot, where mountain-high
From deep abyss the waters climbed,

And, dashing down, before them bore
The floating wrecks of waste and spoil.
Great God! 'twas where they strove most fierce,
The central point of their blind force,
On brink of widely swollen gulf,
An old house stood, with willow-tree
Before and wooden fence, the home
Of widow poor and daughter fair,
His life's one hope.... Or did he rave,
And was it all mere fancy's trick?
Or is our life an empty dream,
The toy and sport of jesting fate?...
And there, as bound by some strong spell,
Or chained to marbled lion's back,
He sate, and could not stir. Around
Was water, water, nothing else.
And all the while, face turned from him,
Supreme on safe, defiant height,
Above the stir of troubled waves,
Sate, with his royal hand outstretched,
The giant on his steed of bronze.

THE BRONZE HORSEMAN. CANTO THE SECOND.

At length, with work of ruin tired,
Her mutiny the Neva ceased,
And to her former course returned,
In mere revolt her pleasure found,
And careless left her prey behind.
As on an unprotected town
Armed brigands fall, and rob and kill,
And naught is heard but cries of grief
And rage, vain threats, and panic shrieks,
Whilst havoc uncontrolled prevails,
Till glut of spoil and fear of law
Disarm the thieves, who home retreat
And half their booty leave in fright.

The waters fell, the vanished roads
Once more appeared. With sinking heart,
Evjenie, half in hope, in fear
And anguish, neared the scarce calmed gulf.
Proud of their strength, its sullen waves
Muttered and surged, as if beneath
Some angry fire still smouldered deep;
And fast they rolled in foaming rage,
And heavily the Neva breathed,
Like panting steed that flies the field.
Evjenie looks, and boat discerns,
And runs as to a treasure found;
In haste he calls the boatman near,
Who, bargaining, consents to bring
Our hero o'er the storm-tossed stream.

And long with tempest-driven waves
The skilful oarsman battling strove,
And oft the boat is sinking lost,
And hurled beneath the cloud-capped crests,
As oft upbounds... until at length
It touched the shore.

The well-known street
And friendly spot are eager sought.
But dazed he looks, for all is changed,
And awful is the sight revealed.
A mass of ruins lies before,

In part thrown down, in part waste blank,
Houses falling, or laid quite prone,
Whilst some are scattered by the waves,
Like corpses left on battle-field
To rot. Headlong, Evjenie sped,
Scarce knowing why or where he rushed,
And ill forebodings weighed his heart.
And now he comes where fate awaits,
As with sealed letter in her hand.
The intervening space is passed,
With hastened step he nears the house:
But what is this he sees?
He stopped...
Retreated... and once more returned..
Bewildered gazed... went on... looked back.
Here is the place their house once stood,
And there the willow-tree. The gates
Here entrance barred. But where the house?
Thoughts of horror now possessed him,
As round and round he marched and stared.
While whirling words broke from his lips,
And with clenched fist his forehead struck,
And sudden shrieked with laughter loud.

Once more, the friendly shades of night
The city fearsome shroud, but few
Their couches sought, and long discussed
Among themselves, with bated breath,
That day of woe.

Clear morning's ray
From out the pale and wearied clouds
The fated city gleamed to cheer.
But few the traces were it found
Of past night's wreck. With purple pall
The ugly work of ill was hid,
And life resumed its wonted ways.
Again the free and open streets
Were thronged with crowds intent on self,
And none to give the dead a thought.
The sleek-dressed clerk for office left
His home. The tradesman, unabashed,
His courage kept and opened his vaults
The Neva had despoiled, and schemed
How best he could his neighbour make
Redeem his loss. The cumbered yards

Of boats were cleared:
And Count Chvostoff,
Poet inspired by heavenly muse,
In verse immortal, though unread,
Failed not to sing of Neptune's wrath.

But poor Evjenie, what of him?
His mind was tender, easy touched,
Nor proof against these grievful woes.
The horrid noise of rebel waves
And winds loud echoed in his ears.
Aimless, he wandered here and there,
Strange thoughts revolving in his mind,
He ne'er could solve. A demon dream
Haunted, followed, and possessed him.
A week, a month went by, and he
Still heedless roamed, nor home returned;
The term elapsed, his room was let
To tenant new, poor as himself,
Nor did he come his goods to fetch,
But soon was lost to world and men.
All day the streets he idly strayed,
And slept at night in wharf or shed,
His food, the crust of bread he begged.
His well-worn cloak in tatters hung
Each day more loose. And wanton boys
Their play would cease, to hurl sharp stones,
As he passed by, and coachmen rude
With whip aroused him from his daze,
As in mid-road he puzzled stood;
And on he moved without complaint:
A voice within, unheard of men,
Had deafened him to outer noise.
And so he lived, like one that is
Nor beast nor man, nor live nor dead,
Nor denizen of earth, nor ghost
Of other world.

By river-side,
He once was sleeping in a wharf;
The trees had cast their summer dress,
And autumn winds begun to blow.
The angry surge beat on the wharf,
Nor ceased to dash against its steps;
As widow knocked importunate
At the unrighteous judge's door.

He woke. But all was dark and dull;
The rain fell fast; the shrill blasts wailed;
And in the distance he could hear
The echo low of sentry's voice.
Up leaped Evjenie; he recalled
The horrors of the past, and rose,
His aimless roamings to resume.
But suddenly he paused, and with
Large eyes of fear he slowly scanned
The dreary space that stretched around.
He found himself beneath the porch
Of spacious house. And on the steps,
With upraised paws, as large as life,
Two lions stood, both keeping guard:
Whilst in the darkness, tow'ring high,
On pedestal of granite rock,
Sate, with his royal hand outstretched,
The giant on his steed of bronze.

Evjenie shuddered, and his thoughts
Grew strangely clear. Again he saw
The place where seas had wildly played,
Where waves of prey had shrieking roared,
And round him dashed with angry whirl:
He saw the lions, square, and *him*,
Who with bronze head, and motionless,
In the darkness proudly towered,
As ever, with his hand outstretched,
He watched the city he had built.

The poor mad creature wildly roamed
Around the rock with aching limbs.
And read the words clear cut in stone;
And, crushed with grief, his bleeding heart
Grew dead within him. And he pressed
His burning brow against the rail;
A blinding mist came o'er his eyes,
And through his frame a shudder ran,
As he stood trembling, lost in gloom,
Before great Russia's giant Tsar.
With finger raised in dumb reproach,
He thought' to speak. But no word came.
And quick he took to headlong flight
It seemed, his face with angry glow
Aflame, the all-dread Tsar had turned,
And fixed on him his searching gaze:

He fled, and, flying, heard behind.
Like roll of thunder, loud and sharp,
The heavy measured tread of feet.
That shook the ground beneath their march
And in the pale moon's silver light,
With hand majestic, far outstretched,
The Statue Knight of Bronze pursued,
High mounted on his lordly steed.
And all that night the crazed wretch heard,
Where'er he sped his flying steps,
In close pursuit the Knight of Bronze,
And measured tramp of prancing steed.
And from that day, if e'er he chanced
To cross the square where statue stood,
A troubled stare came o'er his face,
And quick he pressed to heart his hand,
As if to quell some sharpest pain,
And well-worn cap from head removed,
Nor daring raise his fear-struck eyes.
In stealth slunk by.

Close to the beach,
An island small is seen. And there
Belated fisher anchor casts,
And frugal evening meal prepares;
Or spruce-dressed citizen in boat,
Decked out for Sunday trip, will touch
The lone abandoned isle, where not
A blade of grass redeems the waste.
Twas there the waters, when they fell,
The widow's house had stranded left;
And like black bush it rose above
Their surface, till in early spring
Men came and carted it away.
It was all bare, nor found they aught,
Save our friend, poor mad Evjenie,
On the threshold fallen. And there.
With friendly hands, his corpse they laid.

RUSLAN AND LYUDMILA



Anonymous translation

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DEDICATION

For you, queens of my soul, my treasured
Young beauties, for your sake did I
Devote my golden hours of leisure
To writing down, I'll not deny,
With faithful hand of long past ages
The whispered fables.... Take them, pray,
Accept these playful lines, these pages
For which I ask no praise.... But stay!
For my reward-I need not seek it-
Is hope: Oh, that some girl should scan,
As only one who's lovesick can,
These naughty songs of mine in secret!

PROLOGUE

On seashore far a green oak towers,
And to it with a gold chain bound,
A learned cat whiles away the hours
By walking slowly round and round.
To right he walks, and sings a ditty;
To left he walks, and tells a tale....

What marvels there! A mermaid sitting
High in a tree, a sprite, a trail
Where unknown beasts move never seen by
Man's eyes, a hut on chicken feet,
Without doors, without windows,
An evil witch's lone retreat;
The woods and valleys there are teeming
With strange things.... Dawn brings waves that, gleaming,

Over the sandy beaches creep,
And from the clear and shining water
Step thirty goodly knights escorted
By their Old Guardian, of the deep
An ancient dweller.... There a dreaded
And hated tsar is captive ta'en;
There, as all watch, for cloud banks headed,
Across the sea and o'er a plain,
A warlock bears a knight. There, weeping,
A princess sits locked in a cell,
And Grey Wolf serves her very well;
There, in a mortar, onward sweeping
All of itself, beneath the skies
The wicked Baba-Yaga flies;
There pines Koshchei and lusts for gold....

All breathes of Russ, the Russ of old
There once was I, friends, and the cat
As near him 'neath the oak I sat
And drank of sweet mead at my leisure,
Recounted tales to me.... With pleasure
One that I liked do I recall
And here and now will share with all...

RUSLAN AND LYUDMILA: CANTO THE FIRST

The ways and deeds of days gone by,
A narrative on legend founded....

In princely banquet chamber high,
By doughty sons and guests surrounded,
Vladimir-Bright Sun holds a fete;
His daughter is the chosen mate
Of Prince Ruslan, and these two linking
In marriage, old Vladimir's drinking
Their health, a handsome cup and great
To his lips held and fond thoughts thinking.
Our fathers ate 'thout haste-indeed,
Passed slowly round the groaning tables
The silver beakers were and ladles
With frothing ale filled and with mead.

Into the heart cheer poured they, truly....
The bearers, bowing, solemn-faced,
Before the feasters tankards placed;
High rose the foam and hissed, unruly....

The hum of talk is loud, unceasing;
Abuzz the guests: a merry round.
Then through the hubbub, all ears pleasing,
There comes the gusli's rippling sound.
A hush. In dulcet song and ringing
Bayan, the bard-all hark him well-
Of bride and groom the praise is singing;
He lauds their union, gift of Lel.*

Lel -the Slavic god of love.

Ruslan, o'ercome by fiery feeling,
Of food partakes not; from Ludmila
He cannot tear away his eyes;
He flames with love, he frowns, he sighs,
At his moustache plucks, filled with torme
And, all impatience, counts each moment.
Amid the noisy feasters brood
Three youthful knights. In doleful mood
They sit there, their great tankards empty
With downcast eyes, the fare, though tempting,
Untouched; the goblets past them sail;

They do not seem to hear the tale
Of wisdom chanted by Bayan....
The luckless rivals of Ruslan,
Of love and hate a deadly brew
In their hearts hid, the three are too
O'erwrought for speech. The first of these
Is bold Rogdai of battle fame
(‘Twas he who Kiev’s boundaries
Stretched with his blade); the next, the vain,
Loud-voiced Farlaf, by none defeated
At festal board, but tame, most tame
Mid flashing swords and tempers heated;
The last, the Khazar Khan Ratmir,
A reckless spirit, aye, and ardent.
All three are pale-browed, glum, despondent:
The feast’s no feast, the cheer’s no cheer.

It’s over, and the teasers rise
And flock together. Noise. All eyes
Are smiling, all are on the two
Younff newly-weds.... Ludmila. tearful,
Looks shyly down: her groom is cheerful,
He beams.... Now do the shades anew
Embrace the earth, e’er nearer creeping,
The murk of midnight veils the dome....
The bovars. by sweet mead made sleepy,
Bow to their hosts and make for home.
Ruslan’s all rapture, all elation....
A Vhat bliss! In his imagination
His bride caresses he. But there
Is sadness in the warmth of feeling
With which, their happy union sealing,
The old prince blesses our young pair.

The bridal couch has long been ready;
The maid is led to it.... It’s night.
The torches dim, but Lei already
His own bright lamp has set alight.
Love offers- see — its gifts most tender,
Its fondest wish at last comes true,
On carpets of Byzantine splendour
The jealous covers fall.... Do you
The sound of kisses, love’s sweet token.
And its soft, whispered words not hear?
Does not-come, say-the murmur broken

Of shy reluctance reach your ear?
Anticipation fires the spirit,
O'erjoyed the groom... But lo!-the air
Is rent by thunder, ever nearer
It comes. A flash' The lamp goes out,
The room sw^ays, darkness all about,
Smoke pours.... Fear grips Ruslan, defeating
His native pluck: his heart stops beating...
All's silence, grim and threatening.
An eerie voice sounds twice. There rises
Up through the haze a menacing
Black figure.... Coiling smoke disguises
Its shape.... It vanishes.... Now our
Poor groom, on his brow drops of sweat,
Starts up. by sudden dread beset,

And for his bride-O fateful hour!-
With trembling hand gropes anxiously..
On emptiness he seizes, she
Has by some strange and evil power
Been borne away.... He's overcome....

Ah, if to be love's martyr some
Unfortunate young swain is fated,
His days may well be filled with gloom,
But life can still be tolerated.
But if in your arms, after years
Of longing, of desire, of tears,
Your bride of but one minute lies
And then becomes another's prize,
'Tis much too much... Quite frankly, I,
Were such my case, would choose to die!

But poor Ruslan's alive and tortured
In mind and heart.... O'erwhelmed by news,
Just then arrived, of the misfortune,
The Prince, enraged, turns on the youth.
The whole court summoning, "Ludmila....
Where is Ludmila?" thunders he.
Ruslan does not respond. "My children!
Your merits past high hold I.... Free,
I beg, my daughter from the clutches
Of evil. I am helpless; such is
Old age's piteous frailty.
But though I am too old to do it,
Not so are you. Go forth and save

My poor Ludmila, you'll not rue it:
He who succeeds, shall-writhe, you knave!
Why did you not, wretch, base tormentor,
Know how to guard your young wife better?
Shall have Ludmila for a bride
And half my fathers' realm beside!...

Who'll heed my plea?" "I!" says the grieving,
Unhappy groom. "I!" shouts Rogdai,
And echoed by Farlaf his cry
And by Ratmir is. "We are leaving
Straightway, and pray believe us, sire,
We'll ride around the world entire
If need be. From your daughter parted
Not long will you be, never fear."
The old prince cannot speak for tears;
His gratitude is mute; sadhearted,
A broken man, at door he stands
And to them stretches out his hands.

All four the palace leave together;
Ruslan is ashen-faced, half-dead.
Thoughts of his kidnapped bride, of whether
He'll ever find the maid, with dread
And pain his heart fill. Now the foursome
Get on their restless, chafing horses,
And leaving dust clouds in their wake,
Away along the Dnieper make....
They're lost to sight, but Prince Vladimir
Stands gazing at the road and tries
To span the distance ever-dimming
As after them in thought he flies.

Ruslan, his mind and memory hazy,
Is mute, lost in a kind of trance;
Behind him, o'er his shoulder gazing,
The picture of young arrogance,
Farlaf rides, hand on hip, defiant.
Says he: "At last! The taste is sweet
Of freedom, friends.... When will we meet-
The prospect likes me well-a giant?
Then will blood pour as passions seethe
And victims offer to the sabre.
Rejoice, my blade! Rejoice, my steed,
And lightly, freely prance and caper!"

The Khazar Khan, his pulses racing,
In saddle dances, for in thought
He is the fair young maid embracing
Whose love he has for so long sought.
The light of hope is in his eye,
Now⁷ does he make his stallion fly,
Now⁷ forces him, the good steed teasing,
To rear, now gallops him uphill,
Now lets him prance about at will.

Rogdai is silent; with increasing
Unease his heart fills; dark thoughts chill
And burden him; he is tormented
By jealousy, and, all calm gone,
With hate-glazed eye, like one demented,
Stares sullenly at Prince Ruslan.

Along a single road the rivals
Rode on all through the day until
From east poured shades that night's arrival
Bespoke.... The Dnieper, cold and still,
Is wrapt in folds of mist.... The horses
Have need of rest.... Not far away
A track lies that another crosses.
“Tis time to part,” the riders say.
“Let us chance fate.” So ‘tis decided;
Each horse is given now its head,
And, by the touch of spur unguided,
Starts off and moves where ‘twill ahead.

What do you in the hush of desert
Alone, Ruslan? Sad is your plight.
Was't all a dream — the bride you treasured,
The terrors of your wedding night?
Your helmet pushed down to your brow
Your strong hands limp, the reins let loose,
O'er woods and fields astride your steed
You ride, while faith and hope recede
And leave you well-nigh dead of spirit..

A cave shows Tore the knight; he nears
And sees a light there. His feet lead
Him straight inside. The dark and broo
Vaults seem as old as nature. Moody,
Distraught Ruslan is.... In the cave

A bearded ancient, his mien grave
And quiet, sits. A lamp is burning
Near him, a book lies on his knee;
Engrossed in it, its pages he
With careful hand is slowly turning.
“I bid you welcome, knight! At last!”
Says he in greeting, smiling warmly.
“Here have I twenty long years passed
Of my old age, and grim and lonely
They’ve been.... But now has come the day
For which, foreseeing it, I waited.
To meet, we two, my son, were fated,
Now sit and hear me out, I pray....
Ludmila from you has been taken;
You flag, you droop, by hope forsaken
And faith itself.... ‘Tis wrong! For brief
With evil and its partner, grief,
Will be, I promise, your encounter.
Take heart; with strong, sound spirit counter
The blows of fortune, banish woe,
And, sword aloft held, northward go!

“He who has wronged you, O my daring
Young stalwart, is old Chernomor.
A wizard, he is known to carry
Young maids off to the hills. ‘Tis for
Long years he’s reigned there. None has ever
His castle seen, but through its door
You’ll pass, I know, and end forever
The villain’s rule; by your hand he
Will perish-so ‘tis meant to be!...
I may not yield to indiscretion
And say aught more; your destiny
Yourself from this day on you fashion.”

Our knight falls at the elder’s feet
And in delight his hand he kisses.
The world a bright place seems, and sweet
Life is again; forgot distress is....
But then the sudden joyful glow
His face leaves, and it pales and darkens.
“Do not despair but to me harken,”
The old man says. “I know what so
Disquiets you: you are in fear of
The warlock’s love, eh, knight?... Be calm
The truth is, O my youthful hero,

That he can do the maid no harm.
From sky the stars he'll pluck, I'll wager,
Or shift the moon that sails on high,
But change the law of time and aging
He cannot, hard as he may try.
Though he lets none her chamber enter
And jealous watch keeps at her door,
He is the impotent tormentor
Of his fair captive, nothing more.
While never far from her, he curses
His lot, and soundly — but, my knight,
'Tis time for you to rest: the earth is
Enclosed in shadow; it is night."

On soft moss lies Ruslan, a flame
Before him flickering. He yearns
For soothing sleep, he twists and turns
And flings about-but no, 'tis plain
That sleep won't come. He heaves a sigh
And says: "Nay, Father, sick am I
Of soul and cannot sleep for dreary
And troubled thought. Talk to me, do;
With godly speech, I beg of you,
Relieve my heart: it aches, it's weary...
I make too bold to ask you this;
You, who befriend me, I importune-
Speak! Tell me, confidant of fortune:
Why came you to this wilderness?"

And with a wistful smile replying
To him, the old man says: "Alas,
I have forgot my land!" Then, sighing:
"A Finn am I by birth. It was
My lot to tend the flocks of neighbours,
And I would take them off to graze
In vales on which no stranger's gaze
E'er rested. Carefree midst my labours
Did I remain, and only knew,
Besides the woods and streams, what few
Joys poverty could offer .to me....
Alas! Ahead dark days were looming.

"Near where I lived, a lovely flower,
One named Nahina, bloomed; of our
Young maids none lovelier than she
Was there. One morn, a bagpipe blowing,

My flocks I grazed where grass was growing
In lush profusion. I could see
A brook wind 'fore me; by it, weaving
A garland, sat a dear young lass....
Her beauty — ah, 'twas past believing!-
Drew and enchanted me, and as
I gazed at her I knew I'd seen her
Before.... Yes, knight, it was Nahina,
'Twas fate had brought me there. The flame
Of love was my reward for eyeing
The maid thus brazenly; I came
To know a passion self-denying:
All of its bliss, all of its pain.

"Six months sped by.... I thought to win her
And opened up my heart. I said:
I love thee dearly, sweet Nahina!
But my shy sadness only bred
Scorn in her who was vain and prideful;
She was indifferent to my lot,
And said, of all my pain unmindful:
'Well, shepherd mine, I love thee not!'

"I was estranged from all, and gloomy
Life seemed. The shady native wood,
The games of shepherds-nothing could
My hurt soothe and bring comfort to me
I languished.... But the far seas drew me;
To leave my homeland sought I then
And with a band of fighting men
To brave the ocean's winds capricious....
I hoped to win renown and fame
And for my own Nahina claim.
This planned, according to my wishes,

I called upon some boatmen who
Joined with me in a quest for danger
And gold. My land, to war a stranger,
The clash of steel now heard, and knew
The sound of boat with boat colliding....
On, on we sailed, the billows riding,
My men and I, by sweet hope led,
Both snow and water painting red
For ten long years with gore of foes.
As rumour of our prowess spread,
The foreign rulers came to dread

Our forays, and their champions chose
To flee our blades. Yes, fierce and hearted
Our battles were, and merry, too,
And with the men we had defeated
Together feasted we. But through
The din of war and merrymaking
I heard Nahina's voice, and for
The sight of her in secret aching,
Before me saw my native shore.
'Come, men!' I cried. 'Did we not roam
The world enough? Time to go home!
'Neath native eaves we'll hang our mail;
Is't not, in faith, for this we hanker!'
And leaving in our wake a trail
Of fear, for Finland we set sail
And in her waters soon dropped anchor.

'Fulfilled were all my dreamings past
That set my lone heart faster beating.
O longed-for moment of our meeting,
O blessed hour, you came at last!
There, at the feet of my proud beauty
I laid my sword and, too, the booty
Of war: pearls, corals, gold. 'Fore her,
By jealous womenfolk surrounded,
Her one-time playmates, my unbounded
Love making me her prisoner,
Mute stood I, but Nahina coolly
Turned from me, saying with no sign
That she would e'er relent: 'Nay, truly,
I do not love thee, hero mine!'

"I do not like to speak of things
y. It is pure agony to think of.
E'en now, my son, when at the brink of
I am of death, remembrance brings
Fresh sorrow to my long-numb spirit
And gravely wounds my being whole,
And torn by pain, seared by it, wearied,
I feel the tears down my cheeks roll.

"But hark! In parts I call my home,
Amid the northern fishers lone,
The art of magic lives. The shaded,
Thick-growing forests wrapt in deep,
Eternal silence lie and keep

The secrets of the wizards aged
Who dwell there and whose minds to quest
For wisdom of the loftiest
And weirdest kind are given. Awesome
Their powers are: what was and also
What will be they have knowledge of,
Life can they snuff and foster love.

“And I, love’s mad and avid seeker,
In my despair that ne’er grew weaker,
By means of magic thought to start
In proud Nahina’s icy heart
Of love for me at least a flicker.
Toward the murk of woodland free
My steps in hot impatience turning,
The subtle craft of wizardry
I spent unnumbered years in learning.
Then were the fearsome secrets, sought
By me with such despair, such yearning,
Revealed to my enlightened thought;
Of charms and spells I knew the power:
Love’s aim achieved — O happy hour!
‘Nahina, thou art mine!’ I cried.
‘Now shall I have thee for my bride.’
But once again by fate defeated
Was I and of my triumph cheated.

“Enraptured, with young dreams aglow,
Filled with love’s fervour and elation,
I loudly chant an incantation
And on dark spirits call, and lo!-
A flash of light, a crash of thunder,
And magic whirlwinds start awake,
I feel the earth begin to quake,
I hear it hum and rumble under
My feet, and there in front of me,
The picture of senility,
A crone stands. She is bent and shrunken,
Her hair is white, her eye is sunken
And glazed with age, her head is shaking...
And yet, and yet — had I mistaken
Her for another?-Nay, O knight;
Nahina ‘twas!... In doubt, in fright
The horrid vision now I measured
With unbelieving gaze, my sight
Mistrusting.... ‘Thou! Art thou my treasured

Nahina? Speak!’ from me the cry
Burst forth. ‘Where is thy beauty? Why
Have the gods changed thee so? Have I
Long, then, from life and love been parted?’
‘For forty years!’ I heard her say.
‘Indeed, I’m seventy to-day!...
But never mind! So are lives charted
And so they pass. Thy spring has flown
And mine has too. We are, I own,
Old, both, but be thou not disheartened
By fickle youth’s swift passage. True,
I’m grey, a trifle crooked too,
Less lively and perhaps less charming
Than once I was....’ This in disarming
Tones she declared, her voice a squeak.
‘Come, do not look, I beg, so tragic....
I am-in confidence I speak-
Like thee become well versed in magic.’

“A sorceress! What had she said!...
Struck dumb was I by the admission
And felt a fool, a dunderhead
For all my store of erudition.

“But worse by far was that the spell
That I had cast worked far too well.
My shrivelled idol flared with passion;
She loved me — loved me to obsession!
Her grey lips twisted in a smile,
In graveyard tones the old hag muttered
The wildest of avowals, while
I suffered silently, in utter
Disgust and loathing, and upon
The ground my eyes kept. She wheezed on,
And though, by fits of coughing shaken,
So was she with her subject taken,
She never stopped. ‘My poor heart is
For tender passion born and bliss,’
She croaked. ‘ ‘Tis love alone I covet
And hunger for. I flame, I bum....
O come to me, for thee I yearn;
I’m dying, dying, my beloved!’

“ ‘Twas lustfully that she, Ruslan,
Was ogling me. Her bony fingers
Caught greedily at my caftan....

There to remain, knight, there to linger
Beside her was sheer agony;
I squeezed my eyes shut, for, you see,
I could not bear it any longer,
And broke away.... 'Knaves! Thus to wrong me!'
She yelped. 'A pure maid's life-quite shattered!
Such villainy! For shame! For shame!
As if my love so little mattered!
Alas! I am myself to blame;
You men, I vow, are all the same.
By thy seduction helpless rendered,
To passion wholly I surrendered....
Deceiver! Blackguard! Thou shalt know
What vengeance is, just wait!...'

" 'Twas so
We parted. In these forests buried
E'er since, a hermit's solitary
Life have I led, and of the balm
Of nature tasted, by its calm
And wisdom doctored. I'll not tarry
Long here on earth.... To you alone
Do I impart this; know: the crone
Has not forgot her unrequited,
Scorned passion. In her soul, her blighted
And ugly soul, love's changed to spite;
And that she'll come to hate you, knight
As she does me, you can be sure.
But be not, I entreat you, frightened:
Griefs bound to pass, 'twill not endure.

The old man's story hungrily
Our knight took in. Enchanted by it,
He sat there rapt and clear of eye,
Untouched by sleep. The night was quiet
He never heard it winging by.
Now dawn's bright glow the heavens graces...
With rueful smile Ruslan embraces
The mage, and, full of gratitude,
The cave leaves in a hopeful mood.
He leaps into the saddle deftly,
Grips with his legs the whinnying steed,
And with a whistle moves off swiftly.
"Be with me, Father, in my need!"
He cries. "Farewell!" Across the clearing
The answer carries, his heart cheering:

“Forgive your bride and love her, heed
My counsel, knight! Farewell! Godspeed

RUSLAN AND LYUDMILA: CANTO THE SECOND

You whose swords clash in contest gory,
Persist in your dread rivalry;
Pay tribute full to sombre glory
And relish hate and enmity!
Let the world, gaping at your deadly
Encounters, freeze-know: none will try
To interfere; more-none will, sadly,
Of pity for you breathe a sigh.
You who compete in different fashion,
Of the remote Parnassian heights
The mettlesome and valiant knights,
Fence if you must, but with discretion,
From vulgar bickering refrain:
The herd 'twill only entertain.
And as for you, by tender passion
Made bitter rivals, pray remain
On cordial terms-for he who's fated
To win a maid's love this will do
Though all mankind should lay plans to
Keep the two lovers separated....
Why fume?-It's silly and a sin.
When bold Rogdai, his heart with dim
But chilling boding filled, had parted
From his companions three and started
Across a lonely tract of land,
As he rode swiftly o'er the woody
And silent plain, on his ills brooding,
The hapless youth could ill withstand,
So troubled were his thoughts, so painful,
The Evil Spirit's taunting baneful,
And whispered: "Smite I shall and kill!
Beware Ruslan, Ludmila will
Weep over you, I swear!..." And turning
His steed about, down dale, up hill
He galloped, for sweet vengeance yearning

Meanwhile, Farlaf, that fearless soul,
Had spent in sleep the morning whole,
And then, from noon's hot rays well sheltered,
Beside a brook himself he settled
To dine and thus to fortify
His moral fiber. By and by
He saw a horseman in the mead

Toward him charging. Disconcerted,
The knight with quite uncommon speed
His food and all his gear deserted,
His mail, his helmet, and his spear,
And 'thout a backward glance went flying
Off on his horse. "Stop, wretch, you hear!
The other cried, to halt him trying.
"Just let me catch you, and you're dead-
I'll make you shorter by a head!"
Farlaf, who found the voice belonged
To bold Rogdai, his rival, longed
The more — quite wisely-to be gone
And his horse lashed and goaded on.
So will a rabbit, danger scenting,
Stop short, and, to escape attempting,
Ears folded, by great leaps and bounds
O'er lea, wood, mound, run from the hounds.
Where passed the chase in all its glory
Spring had the snows of winter hoary
Into great, muddy torrents thawed,
And these at earth's breast ceaseless gnawed.

Farlaf's horse, now a wide ditch facing,
His tail shook mightily, and, bracing
Himself, in his teeth took the bit
And leapt across, nor was a whit
The worse for it. Not so his timid
And far less nimble rider who
Rolled down, head over heels, on to
The mud, and lay there, floundering in i
And waiting to be slain.... Rogdai
Storms up, a wrathful vision. "Die,
Poltroon!" he roars, and his sword raises,
But then is brought up short; his gaze is
Fixed on his foe. Farlaf! Dismay,
Surprise, vexation, rage display
Themselves on his face. His teeth grinding
He swears aloud. We see him riding
Away in haste, inclined to laugh
Both at himself and at Farlaf.

Soon on a pathway upward winding
He met a hag with snowy hair,
A feeble, bent old thing. "Go there!"
She quavered, "That's where you will find him!"
And with her staff she pointed north.

Rogdai felt cheered; nay, more-elated.
Quite unaware that death awaited
Him up ahead, he started forth.

And our Farlaf? Upon his bed
Of mud we see him breathless lie.
“Where has my rival gone? Am I
Alive,” he asks himself, “or dead?”
Then suddenly from overhead
A voice comes-it is hoarse, deep-sounding
“Rise, stalwart mine, all’s calm around you,”
The crone says. “Here’s your charger; you
Need fear, good youth, no dangers new.”

At this the knight crawled slowly out
And looked around him in some doubt.
Relieved, he uttered sighing deeply:
“I do believe I got off cheaply....
The Lord be thanked! No broken bones!”

“Ludmila’s far away,” the crone’s
Next words were, “and though we be tempted
To try and find her, to attempt it
Is most unwise.... No, no,” she drones,
“We’ll not succeed: too many hurdles,
And, all in all, to roam the world is
A rather risky enterprise;
You’d soon regret it. I advise
You to go straightway home to Kiev;
On your estate your days you’ll spend
In ease, behind you danger leaving -
Ludmila won’t escape us, friend!”

With this she vanished, and our knight,
The flame of love well-nigh extinguished
And dreams of martial fame relinquished,
Set off for home. ‘Twas not yet night,
But any noise however slight,
A rustling leaf, a bird in flight,
A brook’s song put him in a sweat.

But let us now Farlaf forget
Across a wood we see him ride....
In thought he lovingly embraces
His only love, his fair young bride.
“My wife,” he cries, “my own Ludmila,

Will e'er I find you, dear one, will I
Your gaze full of enchantment meet
And hear your tender voice and sweet?
Say, is it in a wizard's power
You are, and is the early bloom
Of youth to fade? Are you to sour
And wither in a dungeon's gloom?...
Or will one of my rivals seize you
And bear you off?-Nay, love, rest easy:
My head is on my shoulders still,
And this my sword I wield with skill."

One day at dusk Ruslan was riding
Along a steep and rocky shore,
The stream below in shadow hiding,
When with a whine an arrow o'er
His head flew, and behind him sounded
The clang of mail, the heavy pounding
Of hooves, a horse's piercing neigh.
"Halt!" someone shouted. "Halt, I say!"
The knight glanced round: far out afield,
With spear raised high and ready shield,
A rider galloped whistling shrilly.
Ruslan, his heart with anger filling,
His steed turned speedily about
And charged toward his grim assailant
Who met him with a brazen shout:
"Aha, I've caught you up, my gallant!
First taste of steel, then seek your fair!"
Now, this Ruslan could little bear;
He recognized the voice and hated
The sound of it. "How dares he! I'll-"

But where's Ludmila? For a while
Let's leave the two men; we have waited
Quite long enough, 'tis time to turn
To our dear maid now and to learn
How she, one lovely past comparing,
Has at her captor's hands been faring.

A confidant of wayward fancy,
Not always modest have I been,
And this my narrative commencing,
Dared to describe the night-cloaked scene
In which our fair Ludmila's charms
Vere from her husband's eager arms

Whisked off. Poor maid! When, quick as lightening,
The villain with one movement mighty
Removed you from the bridal bed,
And like a whirlwind, skyward soaring,
Through coils of smoke charged on, ahead
Toward his kingdom's mountains hoary,
You swooned away, but all too soon
Recovered from that welcome swoon
To find yourself, aghast, dumfounded,
By lofty castle walls surrounded.

Thus-it was summer-at the door
Of my house lingering, I saw
The sultan of the henhouse chasing
One of his ladies, and moved by
Hot passion, with his wings embracing
The flustered, nervous hen.... On high
A grey kite hovered, old marauder
Of poultry-yards; in rings o'erhead
He slowly sailed, unseen; then, boldly,
With lightning speed, dropped down, a dread
And ruthless foe, his plans death-dealing
Laid earlier.... Up soars he, sealing
The fate of his poor, helpless prey.
Clutched in his talons, far away
He bears her to the safety of
A dark crevasse. In vain, with fear
And hopeless sorrow filled, his love
The rooster calls: he sees her airy
And weightless fluff come drifting near,
By swift, cool breezes downward carried.

Like some dread dream, oblivion
Ludmila chains. She cannot rise
And, in a stupor, moveless lies....
The soft, grey light of early dawn
Revives her, deep within her rouses
Unconscious fear and restlessness;
Sweet thoughts of joy her heart possess,
For surely her beloved spouse is
Nearby!... "Where are you, dear one? Come!
She whispers, and-is stricken dumb.
Where is your chamber, my Ludmila?
Poor, luckless maiden, you lie pillowed
Upon a lofty feather-bed;
On silken cushions rests your head;

The canopy that floats above you
Is tasselled, rich, and like the cover,
Patterned most prettily. Brocade
Is everywhere, and winking, blazing
Gems likewise. From fine censers made
Of gold rise balmy vapours hazy....
But 'tis enough! This pen of mine
Must fly description-by another
Was I forestalled: Scheherezade.
And no house, be it e'er so fine,
Affords you any pleasure, mind you,
Unless your love is there beside you.

Just then, in garments clad air-thin,
Three comely maidens tiptoed in.
With bows for the occasion suited
Ludmila mutely they saluted,
Then one, of footstep light, drew n'
And with ethereal fingers plaited
Her silken locks, a way, I hear,
Of dressing hair that has outdated
Long since become. Upon her head
A diadem of fine pearls setting,
She then withdrew. With softest tread
The second maid approached; 'thout letting
Herself glance up, all modesty,
In sky-blue silk Ludmila she
Gowned quickly, and her golden tresses
Crowned with a mis-like veil that fell
About her shoulders. There-how well
It shields her, with what grace caresses
Charms for a goddess fit; her feet
Encased are in a pair of neat
And dainty shoes. The third maid brings her
A pearl-incrusted sash; unseen,
A gay-voiced songstress ballads sings her....
But neither shoes, nor gown, nor e'en
The pearly sash and diadem
The princess please; no song delights her,
Indifferent she stays to them;
In vain the looking-glass invites her
To eye her new-found finery
And revel in its wealth and splendour -
The sight seems almost to offend her:
Her gaze is blank; sad, silent she.

Those who love truth and like to read
The heart's most secret book, must know
That should a lady, plunged in woe,
In spite of habit or of reason,
Oblivious of time or season,
Into a mirror through her tears
Forget to peek-well, then she is
In a most grievous state, indeed.

Ludmila, left alone again,
Uncertain what to do, beneath
A window stands and through the pane
Drear, boundless reaches, wondering, sees.
On carpets of eye-dazzling snow
Her gaze rests; filled is she with sadness....
Before her all is stark white deadness;
The peaks of brooding mountains show
Above the silent plains, and, sombre,
Seem wrapt in deep, eternal slumber:
No wayfarer plodding slowly past,
No smoke from out a chimney trailing,
No hunter's horn resounding gaily
Over the snow-bound, endless waste....
Only the rebel wind's wail dismal
At times disrupts the calm abysmal,
And etched against the sky's bleak grey,
The nude and orphaned forests sway.

Despairing, tearful, poor Ludmila
Her face hides in her hands, unwilling
To think of what may be in store....
She pushes at a silver door
Which opens with a sound most pleasing;
Before her, with their beauty teasing
The eye, spread gardens that surpass
King Solomon's in loveliness,
And e'en Armide's and those that to
Taurida's prince belonged. The view
Is one of trees, green arbours forming
And swaying gently; in the air
Of myrtle floats the sweet aroma;
Palms line the paths, and bays; with their
Proud crowns the mighty cedars boldly
The heavens brush; agleam with golden
Fruit are the orange groves; a pond
Mirrors it all.... The hills beyond,

The vales and copses by the blaze of
Spring are revived; the wind of May
Sweeps o'er the spellbound leas in play
In song melodious and gay
A nightingale its sweet voice raises;
Great fountains upward, to the sky,
Send sprays of gems, then down, enwreathing
The statues that, alive and breathing,
Around them stand. If Phidias' eye
On these could rest, he, though by Pallas
And by Apollo taught, would, jealous,
His magic point and chisel drop....
In swift and fiery arcs that shatter
'Gainst marble barriers which stop
Their headlong downward plunge and scatter
The tiny motes of pearly dust,
The waterfalls cascade, while just
A few steps farther out, in nooks
By thick trees shadowed, rippling brooks
Plash sleepily.... The vivid greenness
Is by the whiteness here and there
Flecked of the lightly-built pavilions
That offer shelter from the glare....
And roses, roses everywhere!...
But comfortless is our Ludmila,
What round her lies she does not see;
The magic garden does not thrill her
With all its sensuous luxury....
She walks all over, where she's going
Not caring; more-not even knowing,
But weeping copious tears, her eye
Fixed sadly on the merciless sky....
Then suddenly her gaze grows brighter
And to her lip her hand flies lightly:
Despite the sparkle of the morn
A frightening thought in her is born....
The dread way's open: death waits for her -
Above a torrent, there before her,
A bridge hangs 'twixt two cliffs. Forlon
The hapless maid is and despondent,
She looks upon the foaming stream,
Her tears grow ever more abundant,
She strikes her heaving breast-'twould ;
She is about to jump-but no,
We see her pause ... and onward go.

Time passes, and Ludmila, weary,
(Too long has she been on her feet)
Feels her tears drying as the cheering
Thought comes that yes, it's time to eat.
She drops down on the grass, looks round her,
And lo!-a tent's cool walls surround her....
The gleam of crystal! A repast
Is set before her, unsurpassed
In choice of food. The gentle sound of
A harp steals near. But though at this
She marvels, our young princess is
Still not at peace, still sorrow-hounded.
"A captive, from my love torn, why
Should I not end it all and die?"
Thinks she. "Oh, villain, you torment me
Yet humour me: such is your whim,
But I ... I scorn you and contempt
Your wily ways. This feast you sent me,
This gauzy tent wherein I sit,
These songs, a lovelorn heart's outpouring,
Which, for all that, are rather boring,-
In faith, I need them not a whit!
'Tis death I choose, death!" And repeating
The word again, the maid starts... eating.

Ludmila rises; in a twinkling
Gone are the tent and rich repast;
The harp is silenced, not a tinkling
Disturbs the calm.... On walks she, past
The greening groves and round them wanders,
While high above the wizard's gardens
The moon appears, of night the queen,
And in the heavens reigns supreme.
From every side soft mists come drifting
And on the hilltops seek repose.
Our princess feels inclined to doze,
And is by some strange powers lifted
As gently as by spring's own breeze
And carried through the air with ease
Back to the chamber richly scented
With rose oil, and put down again
Upon the couch where, grief-tormented,
She lay before. And now the same
Three youthful maidens reappear
And, round her bustling, they unfasten
Hooks and the like of them and hasten

To take her raiments off. They wear
An anxious look; of mute compassion
Their aspect leaves a faint impression
And of a dull reproach to fate.
But let's not tarry more: 'tis late,
And fair Ludmila is by tender
And skillful hands by now undressed.
Robed in a snowy shift that renders
Her charms more charming still, to rest
She lays her down. The three maids, sighing,
Back out with bows, the door is shut.
What does our captive? - Lies there, but
Shakes leaf-like, and, sleep from her flying,
Feels chilled and dares not breathe. Her gaze
Bedimmed by fear, she moveless stays
And tense, with all her being trying
To penetrate the voiceless gloom,
The numbing stillness of the room;
Her heart throbs wildly, fitfully,
An agitated, endless thrumming....
The silence seems to whisper; she
Hears someone to her bedside coming
And in her pillows hides, and oh! -
The horror of it - footsteps.... No!
It cannot be, she must be dreaming.
The door swings open; there's a flare
Of light, and silent, pair by pair,
A file of Moors, their sabres gleaming,
Steps in with even, measured stride.
A look most grave and solemn wearing,
On downy pillows they are bearing
A silver beard. Puffed up with pride,
A pose assuming grand and stately,
Behind it marches in sedately
A hunchbacked dwarf, chin high. It is
To him the beard belongs. On his
Clean-shaven pate a tall, close-fitting
Tarbush. wound round with cloth, is sitting.
He nears her, and Ludmila, led
By shock and fright, flies off her bed
And at him, and his cap she clutches,
And lifts a shaking fist, no doubt
To try to shield herself. And such is
The shriek the poor maid now lets out
The Moors are deafened by't, while pale
Than his fair captive turns her jailer.

He makes to flee, half turns about,
Claps hands to ears in desperation,
And trips, a victim of frustration
And umbrage, on his beard, falls to
The floor, gets up, falls down anew,
Is quite entangled.... In a dither
His dusky menials all are. Hither
And thither rush they, shout and push.
Then. flushed, confused, a wee bit angered,
They bear him off to be untangled
And quite forget the dwarfs tarbush.

But what of our young hero? Pray
Remember the unlooked-for fracas.
Your pencil, quick, Orlovsky! Make us
A sketch of that night-shrouded fray.

The moon shines down upon a cruel
And savage match. Incensed, the young
Combatants fight their bloody duel
Thout respite. Their great lances flung
Are far from them, their swords lie shattered,
Likewise their shields, their mail is spattered
With blood.... And yet the gory joust
Goes on. Beneath them, waging battle,
Their steeds whip up dark clouds of dust.
In an embrace of steel the two
Bold knights are locked (they're on their mettle),
But seem quite moveless, as if to
Their saddles welded. Rage and ire
Their limbs turn stiff. A liquid fire
Sweeps like a torrent through their veins;
They're intertwined; chest 'gainst chest streins-
But now they weaker grow, they tire;
'Tis clear that soon one of them must
Go under, by the other bested.
Ruslan with iron hand a thrust
To his fierce rival gives, and, wresting
Him from the saddle, lifts him high
Above himself and never falters
But hurls him down into the waters
That seethe below them, shouting "Die!"

I'm sure, my friends, you've guessed arigh
With whom my brave and gallant knight
His duel fought. Of battles deadly

The seeker rash it was, Rogdai.
The hope of Kiev, darkly, madly
Ludmila loved he and was by
This led to seek his rival. On
A Dnieper bank it was he found him:
Persistence and resolve had won!
Alas! The hero's strength unbounded
Deserted him, and in the wild
He met his end, was then beguiled
By a young mermaid who caressed him,
And to her icy bosom pressed him,
And, laughing, drew him down at last....
For many years thereafter, when
Night came and o'er the heavens cast
Its sable shroud, his ghost, appearing
There on the bank or in a clearing,
Would frighten lonely fishermen.

RUSLAN AND LYUDMILA: CANTO THE THIRD

You tried to stay from all eyes hidden
Save friendship's own, my verse-in vain!
To envy's scrutiny unbidden
Are you subjected all the same.
A mindless critic has already
The ticklish question asked me, why,
As if to mock Ruslan, his lady
I have been calling "maid".
Now, I
Appeal to you, my good, kind reader,
Does not with his lips malice speak?
Come, Zoilus, come, sly-tongued schemer -
What fitting answer can I make?
Blush, wretch, and God be with you, argue
With you I'll not, my heart is free
Of tainted thought, and silent, mark you,
I stay, kept so by modesty.
Dull Hymen's victim, you, Climene,
Will understand; yes, I can see you
Gaze downward languidly, for me you
Feel deeply, sweet.... A tear falls, then
Another on the lines my pen

Has scribbled; clear are they, I know,
To hearts like yours; you flush, the glow
Fades from your eye, your muted sigh is
Most eloquent-a time of trials
Is nearing.... Quake, O jealous one!
For wilful Love with Anger mated
A plot lays-yes, well may you frown:
Your brow inglorious is fated
To boast revenge's tw^in-horned crown.

A cold dawn gilds the finely chiselled
Tops of the hills.... There reigns throughout
Grim silence. Sulkily the wizard
In dressing gown and still without
His cap, sits on the bed, and, yawning,
Seems angered by the glow of morning.
His dusky slaves, close to him pressing,
Are busy with his beard, a comb,
A fine one, made of walrus bone,
Through all its curvings gently passing

To give them strength and beauty, thy
Pour balm upon his termless whiskers,
And, using curling irons, briskly
Make waves in them.... The calm of day
Is broken-through the window sailing,
A dragon comes; it clangs its scaly,
Well furbished armour, folds its wings,
Coils swiftly into shiny rings,
And suddenly, to the surprise
Of all, takes old Nahina's guise.
"Hail, brother mine!" says she. 'I knew you
Till now by loud report alone,
But never grudged you, be it known
The high esteem and honour due you.
Now secret fate has joined us two
In enmity. The threat of danger
Hangs like a dark cloud over you,
While I'm to be the sole avenger
Of slighted honour, mine, my own;
Its voice I heed."
The dwarf, a wily
Look on his face, in unctuous tones
Makes his reply: 'T value highly,"-

To her he now extends his hand-
"Divine Nahina, our alliance.
We'll easily the Finn withstand;
I fear him not at all, for mine is
The greater strength; he ill compares
With me, I vow. This beard I wear,
Grey though it is, has special powers,
And no bold knight, no foe of ours,
However brave, no mortal can,
Unless by hostile force 'tis severed.
Vpset mv least design or plan;
Ludmila will be mine forever.
As for Ruslan, to die he's doomed!"
"To die! To die!" the witch repeated
With catty spite. "To die!" she boomed.
And then. her mission thus completed.
She hissed three times, thrice stamped the ground,
And flew. a dragon's shape regaining,
Off and away, with vengeance flaming..

In fine brocade most richly gowned
And bv the old witch cheered and heartened,

The wizard to the maid's apartment
Anew decided to repair
And take his silken whiskers there
And lovelorn heart. We see him going
From room to room, he passes through
A row of them, vexation growing.
Where is his fair young captive? To
The park he hastes at first, then makes for
The grove, the waterfall, the lake shore,
The arbours, but, dear reader mine,
Finds of the princess not a sign.
By this he's driven nearly frantic,
We hear him moaning, raving, ranting;
He pants, he shakes in every limb,
The light of day's obscured for him.
"Here, slaves!" he splutters, in a flurry.
"The maid is lost! She's disappeared!
Be off with you, you idlers, hurry!
If she's not found, with this my beard,
I jest not, I will have you strangled.
Beware!"

But let us leave the angered
Dwarf, reader, and I'll tell you where
Our maid has gone.... All night she pondered
Her fate, of danger well aware,
But as she wept she ... smiled. You'll wonder
Why so.... She'd met the dwarf, and he,
Despite the beard that she so hated,
Seemed a mere clown, and, you'll agree,
That fear and laughter are ill-mated.
Ludmila rises as the dawn
Is born, and morning's rays creep nearer,
Her sleepy gaze unconscious drawn
Toward a lofty, shining mirror.
Instinctively she lifts her tresses
From lily shoulders, o'er them passes,
As habit tells her to, her hands
And plaits the silky, golden strands.
The garments that she has been given
Lie in a corner. With a sigh
She starts to dress, is newly driven
To quiet tears, but keeps an eye
Upon the faithful glass wherein
She sees herself. A sudden whim
To put the dwarfs hat on now seizes

The princess. It is always fun,
Now, is it not, to try things on,
The very thought is one that pleases!
Besides, by none can she be seen,
And, what is of no smaller matter,
There is no hat that will not flatter
A girl who's only seventeen!
And so the wicked midget's hat
Ludmila turns this way and that;
Straight, then askew she makes it sit,
Down on her eyebrows pushes it,
Claps it on front-to-back.... Behold!
A miracle!-In times of old
They happened often, it appears-
Ludmila's image disappears,
Gone is she from the glass completely;
But in a moment, as she neatly
Turns the hat round, she's there again!
Once, twice she tries it, and the same
Thing happens. Cries the princess: "Splendid!
My troubles now are all but ended.
So much for you, vile dwarf, your hunt
For me is over!" And, cheeks glowing,
Herself to be in safety knowing,
She puts the hat on back-to-front.

For shame! Too long has our attention
Been claimed by beard and hat of late;
Our hero giving up to fate,
Of him-alack!-we made no mention.
His duel with Rogdai behind him,
He passes through a lonely wood,
And in a sunlit dale we find him
His stallion reining in. A mood
Of sudden, awful dread comes o'er him:
An ancient battlefield's before him,
And grim it looks, for everywhere
Gleam yellow bones, and here and there
Old, broken armour lies, corroding;
A quiver and a rusty shield
Rest near at hand; far out afield
Stiff, bony fingers hold a moulding
Green sword, a skull is seen to rot
Within a weed-grown helm. And what
Is that ahead? A skeleton,
That of a knight, still armed and on

His fallen, fleshless charger seated,
As if alive and undefeated.
Entwined with ivy, arrows, lances,
Spears from the earth stick. Not a sound
Disrupts of these forlorn expanses
The haunting silence and profound;
The sun alone the vale invades
Of death and of its lingering shades.

Sad-eyed the knight around him gazes.
“O field, wide field, you bear the traces
Of slaughter,” says he with a sigh.
“Who planted you to bones and why?
By whose fleet stallion were you trampled?
What bloody battle here was fought
With perseverance unexampled?

Who prayed here and salvation sought?
Why are you mute, why with the grasses
O’ergrown of cold oblivion?
Is there escape from it for none?
Is it that time all, all erases?
What if upon some nameless hill
I am to lie? Mayhap Bayan
Will never chant of me or on
My deeds dwell...”

Thus thought he
It came to him, and this most clearly,
That what he needed-needed dearly-
Was armour and a sword, the night
Of combat having left him quite
Unarmed, alack, or ... very nearly.
On this intent, he walks around
The battlefield where bones lie scattered
And armour, time- and weather-battered,
To see if something can be found.
A sudden clank! A rousing clatter!
The plain from numbing sleep awakes.
A helmet and a shield, the latter
At random picking up, he takes,
And then a ringing horn, but no
Sword to his liking finds, although
Scores of them strew the field of battle:
Being no puny modern knight,
Young Prince Ruslan declines to settle

For one he thinks too short or light.
The boredom fearing of inaction,
A steel lance chooses he for play,
Puts on a hauberk for protection,
And, thus arrayed, goes on his way.

The flames of sunset, slowly paling,
Fade o'er an earth embraced by sleep.
From out the mists the heavens veiling,
A golden moon is seen to creep.
The steppe grows dimmer, nighttim's hazes
Float over it; the path looms dark.
As our young knight rides on, his gaze
Drawn by a huge black mound, and-hark!-
A fearsome snore comes from't. Our hero
Undaunted by it, rides up nearer:
The strange mound seems to breathe. Ruslan,
Quite unperturbed, looks calmly on.
Not so his steed, who balks at making
Another step and stands there quaking
With bristling mane and twitching ear
In quite ungovernable fear.
But now the pale orb born to range
The sleepy skies, lights up the nightly,
Mist-covered plain and mound more brightly,
A sight revealing wondrous strange.
Can pen describe the like?... A Head,
A living Head is there! In slumber
Its eyes are shut, it snores, is dead
To all the world, but every rumble,
Each breath and wheeze that from it comes
The helmet stirs and sends the plumes
That reach the shadowed heights a'swaying.
Above the gloomy plain and greying,
The wasteland's guard, in all its chill
And frightful splendrousness it towers,
An aw^esome hulk, part of the still
And fearful night, possessed of powers
Weird, menacing.... Ruslan decides
To rouse it, and, his eyes half doubting,
Around the Head he slowly rides.
Here is the nose! Without dismounting,
The nostrils with the tip of his
Sharp lance he delicately teases.
The great face puckers up at this;
The great Head, eyes now open, sneezes!...

A whirlwind starts, dust swirls, the pain
Rocks mightily and rocks again,
As if by a convulsion shaken.
The whiskers, lashes, eyebrows rain
Whole flocks of owls. The groves awaken.
The echo sneezes. Shocked, the steed
Lets out a neigh and rears.... Indeed,
He all but throws the knight. A bellow
The air rends: "Back, you foolish fellow!
I jest not. Come and get your due:
I gobble malaperts like you!"

Ruslan, provoked, looks round, and, reining
His horse in sharply, laughs in scorn,
To make a tart retort disdaining.
"Was ever such a nuisance born!"
The Head declares (its tones are surly).
"Sent here by fate to try me, were you?
What do you want? Make off! Adieu!
I'm going back to sleep." "Not you!"
The prince exclaims, these rude words hearing,
And, filled with anger and disgust,
Says: "Silence, empty pate! A just
Truth is it, one not said in vain:
A massive dome, a pygmy brain!"
And then he adds in accents searing:
"I ride along and no grudge bear you,
But cross my path, and I won't spare you!"

At this, the Head, by such cheek numbed,
To a most awful rage succumbed.
It swelled, it flamed, its pale lips trembled,
Turned paler still, were flecked with froth,
Its eyes two balls of fire resembled,
Great clouds of steam now poured from both
Its ears and mouth. And then it started,
Cheeks puffing up, with all its might
To blow at our hapless knight.
To no avail the horse, much startled,
Head downward held and eyes squeezed tight,
To push through rain and whirlwind strained;
Half-blinded, terrified, and drained
Of half his strength, he spun around
And ran, for safer places bound.
Ruslan made fresh attempts to guide him
And to attack the Head anew-

He was repulsed, at him it blew
And cackled crazily. Behind him
He heard it boom: "Ho, knight, where to?
To flee is most unwise of you,
You'll break your neck! Come, my assailant,
Attack me, show me just how valiant
You are! But no, you'd better stop;
Your poor old nag is fit to drop!"
And sticking out its tongue, it taunted
And teased the knight. The monster's leer
Left our young hero quite undaunted
Though sorely vexed. He raised his spear
And at the Head the weapon flung,
And, quivering, the brazen tongue
It pierced and there was to remain
Stuck fast in it. Of blood a torrent
Poured from the maw. The great Head's pain
And its amazement were apparent;
Gone was its cheek, its beet-red hue;
Upon the prince its great eyes fastened,
It chewed on steel, and greyer grew,
And though still seething, was much chastened.
So on the stage one of the Muse's
Less worthy pupils sometimes loses
His head, a sense of where he is
When deafened by a sudden hiss.
He pales, he quakes, what he is there for
Well-nigh forgetting, with an effort
Declaims his lines and ... stops, unheard
By the derisive, jeering herd.
Our gallant knight, the huge Head finding
To be thus discomposed and dazed,
Flew hawk-like toward it, hand upraised
And in a heavy gauntlet cased,
And dealt the giant cheek a blinding
And crushing blow. There starts an echo
That carries o'er the gloomy plain.
The dewy grass is richly stained
With bloody foam. For nigh a second
The great Head sways and rocks, the, lo!-
It topples, hits the ground below
And starts to roll, the steel helm maing
A mighty clatter. But behold!-
A huge sword, glittering like gold,
A champion's sword, there's no mistaking
The look of it, lies where the Head

Lay 'fore its fall. The prince, elated,
Now seizes it, and the ill-fated
Head follows, by the fierce wish led
To lop its ears and nose off. Routed
It lies before him, he's about to
Bring down the sword when a low plea,
A faint moan stops him. Startled, he
Lets his arm sink, his ire subsiding,
And ruth, not wrath his actions guiding.
As in a vale snow quickly thaws
When touched by midday's sunshine flaming,
So supplication trims the claws
Of vengeance, its brute powers taming.

"You brought me to my senses," sighing,
The Head now said in accents lame.
"Your right hand proved beyond denying
That I have but myself to blame.
I promise you, I will obey you,
But mercy, mercy, knight, I pray you!
For grim has my plight been; I too
Was once a valiant knight like you,
By none on battlefield excelled
Or to lay down my arms compelled.
And happy I were't not for my
Young malformed brother's rivalry!
For Chernomor, that fount of hatred,
Alone my downfall perpetrated!
A bearded midget and a stain
Upon our family's good name,
For me who was both tall and straight
He felt a bitter jealousy,
But hid his all-consuming hate
Behind an outward courtesy.
Alas! I have been simple ever,
While he, this wretch of comic height,
Is diabolically clever
And full of viciousness and spite.
Besides-I quake as I confess this-
That fancy beard of his possessed is
Of magic powers: while whole it stays
That true embodiment of evil,
The dwarf, is safe from harm. With base
Intentions but in accents civil
To me one fateful day he said:
I need your help.' (There's no refusing

Such an appeal.) ‘You see, perusing
A book of magic once, I read
That where rise mighty hills, and breakers
Against them smash, in a forsaken
Stone vault, known to no human, lies
A magic sword that was created
By baneful spirits. Fascinated,
I studied hard and learnt the meaning
Of secret words, in this wise gleaning
A truth to great fears giving rise:
That this sword, so the skies portend
And fate wills, both our lives will end
By parting us, my friend and brother,
Me from my beard, you from your head.
We must procure the sword, none other,
And ‘thout delay’. ‘Well, well,’ I said,
‘What’s stopping us? We need not tarry!
You’ll point the way out. Come, now, hurry,
Get on my shoulder, brother mine;
On to the other one a pine
I’ll hoist. If need be we will go
To the earth’s very end.’ And so
Upon our way at once we started,
And, God be thanked, as if to spite
The soothsay, all at first went right,
And those far mountains, happy-hearted,
I reached at last and went beyond,
And there the secret dungeon found,
And with my bare hands broke it open
And drew the sword out, always hoping
That fate would merciful remain.
But no! We quarrelled once again.
The cause ?-O’er which was to possess it
No mean reward, I must confess it.
He raved, I reasoned, so it went
Until the wily one, while seeming
To yield his ground and to relent,
Devised, to work my ruin scheming,
A knavish ruse. ‘Enough! This sparring,
This shameful tiff, life’s pleasures marring,’
Said he with solemn mien, ‘must cease.
Is it not better to make peace?
Whose sword this is to be, I’m thinking,
Fate can decide. We’ll each an ear
Put to the ground, and if a ringing
Should yours reach first, why, brother dear,

You will have won it.' And, so saying,
He dropped on to the ground, and I,
I followed suit and lay down by
His side.... Ah, knight, there's no gainsaying
I was a dolt, a knucklehead,
A perfect ass to have believed him-
I told myself I would deceive him
And was myself deceived instead!
The ugly wretch stood up, and, stealing
On tiptoe to me from the back,
The sword raised. Dastardly attack!-
It sang, a death-blow to me dealing.
Ere I could turn, my poor head was
No longer in its place, alas.
Preserved by some dark, occult force,
It lives (which is no boon, of course),
But all the rest of me, unburied,
Rots in a place to man unknown;
With blackthorn thickly overgrown
My frame is; by the midget carried
I (Just the head) was to this spot
And left to guard-ignoble lot!-
The magic sword. For ever after
It shall be yours, 'tis only right.
Fate's kind to you; should you, O knight,
The dwarf meet, be he e'er so crafty,
Avenge me-with this great sword smite
The ruthless knave, my heart relieving
Of all its suffering and grieving.
The juicy smack you gave me I
Will then forget, without a sigh
Or a reproach this sad world leaving."

RUSLAN AND LYUDMILA: CANTO THE FOURTH

Each morning as I wake from slumber
To God I tender heartfelt praise
That of magicians nowadays
There is a marked decrease in number,
And that they render now far less
Precarious our marriages.
In fact, their spells need not be dreaded
By those of us but newly wedded.
But there is witchery and guile,
Blue eyes, a tender voice, a smile,
A dimpled cheek, and all the rest,
Which to avoid, I find, is best.
The honeyed poison they exude
Intoxicates; I dread, I fear them.
Like me beware of staying near them,
Embrace repose and quietude.

O wondrous genius of rhyme,
O bard of love and love's sweet dreaming,
You who portray the sly and scheming
Dwellers of hell and realms divine,
Of this inconstant Muse of mine
The confidant and keeper faithful!
Forgive me, Northern Orpheus, do,
For recklessly presuming to
Fly after you in my tale playful
And catching in a most quaint lie
Your wayward lyre....

My good friends, I
Know that you heard about the evil
Old wretch, the hapless sinner who
In days of yore sold to the devil
His own soul and his daughters' too;
Of how through charity and fasting
And faith and prayer sincere, long-lasting
And penitence without complaint
He found a patron in a saint;
How, when the hour struck, he died,
How his twelve daughters slept, enchanted.
Stirred were we, yes, and terrified
By visions strangely darkness-mantled,
By Heaven's wrath, the Arch-fiend's fury,

The sinner's torments. With enduring
Delight and joy, let us confess,
We eyed the chaste maids' loveliness,
Walked with them, sad of heart and weeping,
Around the castle's toothy wall,
Or stayed beside them, vigil keeping
O'er their calm sleep, their peaceful thrall.
We called upon Vadim, exhorted
Him to come soon, and when the blest,
The holy ones awoke, escorted
Them to their father's place of rest.
Yet had we been deceived and dare I
The truth speak and misgiving bury?...

Ratmir goads his steed on, his way
Toward southern plains impatient making,
Filled with the hope of overtaking
Ludmila 'fore the end of day....
The crimson skies turn slowly darker
And vainly with his gaze he strains
To pierce the haze that cloaks the plains
And sleepy stream. A last ray sparkles
Above the wood and paints it gold.

By nighttime's dark, thick veil enfolded,
Our knight rides past black, jutting boulders...
Oh, for a place to sleep!... Behold!-
A vale before him lies, an old
Walled castle perching high above it
Upon a cliff top; shadow-covered,
At every corner turrets show.
With all a swan's glide, smooth and slow
Along the wall there walks a maiden;
By twilight's faint ray lit is she,
And on the soft air dreamily
Her song floats, in the distance fading:

"Night cloaks the lea; from far away
The chilling winds of ocean carry.
Come, youthful roamer, do not tarry;
Take shelter in our castle, pray!

"The nights in languid calm we spend,
The days in feasts and merrymaking.
Come, youthful wanderer, attend
This fete of ours, to joy awaking.

“We many are and beauties all;
Our lips are soft, our speeches tender.
Come, youthful wanderer, surrender
And heed our joyous, secret call!

“For thee, O knight, at birth of morning
A farewell cup of wine we’ll fill.
Heed thou our summons with a will,
Our gentle plea refrain from scorning.

“Night cloaks the lea, from far away
The chilling winds of ocean carry.
Come, youthful roamer, do not tarry,
Take shelter in our castle, pray!”

He hears her in this manner greet him
And hastens, tempted, to the gate
Where other fair maids, smiling, wait,
A throng of them come out to meet him
Their eyes to his face glued, they seek
To make him welcome. How entrancing
Their speeches are, the words they speak!...

Two of them lead away his prancer.
The castle enters he; en masse
The fair young hermits follow. As
One of his winged helm relieves him,
Another ‘thout his armour leaves him,
A third removes his sword and shield.
The garb of warfare’s bound to yield
To flimsier dress. But first the splendours
Of a true Russian bath wait for
The wayworn youth. In torrents endless
We see the steaming water pour
Into the silver tubs; it eddies
And swdrls; swift fountains upward send
Sprays that the warm air coolness lend,
A breezy freshness; all’s made ready
To please and gratify the khan.
Rich are the rugs that he lies on!
Transparent wisps of steam curl o’er him;
The maids, all half-nude loveliness,
Around him crowd, a mute caress
Hid in their downcast eyes, and for him
Care with a wordless tenderness.

Above him one waves birch twigs that
Send off sweet scents, another, at
His side stays put and waxes busy,
The juice of spring's fresh roses using
To cool his weary legs and arms
And drown in aromatic balms
His curly locks. Ratmir, enraptured,
Forgets Ludmila, long since captured,
And her once dreamt-of, longed-for charms.
With languor filled and with desire,
His roving eye a gleam, he burns,
All passion, and, his heart afire,
For love and its fulfilment yearns.

But now⁷ the baths he leaves, and, wearing
Rich velvets, to a feast sits down,
With the young sirens gladly sharing
The wonders of the board. I own
I am no Homer to be singing
In lofty verse (not mine his pen
The feasts of Grecian fighting men
And their great goblets' merry ringing.
No, like Parry I would that my
Imprudent lyre might tender sigh
O'er love's sweet kiss and sing the praises
Of nude forms dimmed by night's soft hazes!..
Lit by the moon the castle is;
I see a chamber where, reclining
Upon a couch, Ratmir sleeps, pining
For love in dreamy languor. His
Once pallid brow and cheeks are flaming,
His lips, half-open, are aglow
And seem to be in secret claiming
Another's lips; he heaves a low,
A moan-like, lingering sigh, and, seizing
The quilt, with quickened, fevered breathing,
To his breast presses it.... The door
Squeaks open, moon beams streak the floor,
A maid steals in.... Awake, Ratmir!
Of sleep asunder tear the meshes!
Night's every moment is too precious,
Pray waste them not!... The maid draws near
The sleeping knight with softest tread....
His face, on hot down pillowed, blazes,
The silk quilt's slipped from off the bed.
She holds her breath and at him gazes,

Entranced by what she sees, by this
Limp, sensuous form now left 'thout cover:
She's sanctimonious Artemis
Beside her youthful shepherd lover.
Then, gracefully and lightly she
Puts on the couch a rounded knee,
And o'er the lucky sleeper leaning,
Sighs deeply, to his breathing listens,
And rouses him from sensuous dreaming
With passionate and fiery kisses....

But stay! Beneath my slowing fingers
The virgin lyre now turns still,
My shy voice weaker grows — we will
Leave young Ratmir, I dare not sing of
Him more or in this vein go on:
'Tis time, friends, to recall Ruslan,
That stalwart staunch as he is fearless,
That lover true, that gallant peerless.
Exhausted by the mighty fray,
Beneath the Head he now lies sleeping,
But early morning's shining ray
Already o'er the sky comes creeping,
And turns the Head's thick locks in play
To molten gold. Our young knight, blinking,
So sharp's the light, from earthen bed
Springs quickly up, and in a twinkling
By his swift steed is onward sped.

The days run on, the fields turn yellow,
The leaves drop from the trees' bared crowns;
The autumn wind's fierce whistling drow
The winged songsters' music mellow.
The nude brown hills are daily haunted
By heavy fogs, for winter's near.
But our young gallant knows no fear
And, by its icy breath undaunted,
Heads northward. Daily now he meets
Fresh barriers: now bravely fights he
Another knight, now beats a mighty
And awesome giant, now defeats
A crafty witch. One night he even
As in a dream saw mermaids sit
On swaying, mist-clothed branches lit
By silver moonbeams. Closer driven,
He watched them, full of wonder. They

Said ne'er a word, but smiling slyly,
Tried to enchant and to beguile him.
By kind fate shielded, fast away
The stalwart rode: they could not win him,
Desire soundly slept within him;
To find Ludmila was his goal:
For he was hers-hers, heart and soul.

Meanwhile, kept from the dwarfs advances
Safe by the hat that she has on,
Annoyed by no unwanted glances,
For thus arrayed, she's seen by none,
What does Ludmila?... Silent, teary,
She walks the garden paths alone
And pines for Prince Ruslan, her dearly
Beloved spouse; then, to her home
In far-off Kiev her thoughts flying,
She brightens and, no longer sighing,
Embraces father, brothers, sees
Her youthful playmates in her dreams
And her old nannies; separation
And thralldom suddenly forgot,
She's back among them all; but not
For long does her imagination
Bear her away with it, and soon
Anew is she immersed in gloom....
As for the lovesick villain's minions,
His orders wordless they obey
And search the castle, the pavilions.
The grounds 'thout respite night and day.
They shout, they rush about insanely,
But all, let us admit it, vainly,
For being an accomplished tease,
The maid provoked them without cease.
Before them suddenly appearing,
She'd call out happily, "Yoo-hoo!"

And spotting her as well as hearing
Her voice, the slaves, a motley crew,
Would run to catch her only to
Seize upon empty air; her tinkling
Laugh sounded as the cap she drew
Down on her head, and in a twinkling
Was gone.... Where she had passed, they knew,
For signs of it, however fleeting,
Were to be seen: from off a tree

Ripe fruit might vanish, grass might be
Left crushed and limp; that she'd been eating
Or drinking or else resting there
They could not help but be aware.
A cedar or a birch provided
The maid with shelter; on a bough
She'd perch and try to doze, but how
Could sleep come to a maiden blinded
By endless tears, her heart grief-torn!...
Against a tree trunk weakly leaning,
She might sigh wearily and yawn
And fall a prey to fitful dreaming....
But when the new-born light of day
Night's shadows drove away, and pearly
The skies turned, 'neath the fall's cool spray
She'd wash. The dwarf, one morning early,
Saw, upward forced by hands unseen,
The water play, then join the stream....
Till darkness had anew descended
And moonbeams the lone gardens combed,
Of spirit sore, by none attended,
Ludmila its far reaches roamed.
At times the echoes would be bringing
Her sweet voice closer, softly singing.
Threads from a Persian shawl, a leaf
Chewed through, a tear-stained handkerchief,
A garland by her quick hands made
Might be found lying in a glade.

His passion and frustration mounting.
All else save his piqued pride discountins
The dwarf has but a single thought:
That the young princess must be caught.
Thus did famed Lemnos' hobbling smith,
Accepting the connubial wreath
From the unrivaled Aphrodite,
Decide to snare her charms, delighting
The laughing gods by showing them
Of love the cunning stratagem.

One day the maid sat bored and weary
Inside a marble summer-house
And gazed abstracted through the boughs

Of trees by wind swayed at the cheery,
Bloom-covered meadow just beyond.

“My love!” she hears. Ruslan! The sound
Of his dear voice. He’s there, in person:
His face, his form; but dull of eye
And pale is he, he bleeds, his thigh
Is gashed: a wound, a bad one. “Mercy!
Ruslan, ‘tis you!” And with a cry
She flies to him, and, heartsore, shaking
In tears, says to him, her voice breaking:
“Ruslan, my husband, you are here
And wounded, bleeding.... Oh, my dear!”
Her arms go round him.... God in Heaven!
What horror’s this! She cannot stir,
She’s trapped, a net enmeshes her!...
The cap falls off. Who is her craven
And foul pursuer? Cold of limb,
She hears: “She’s mine!” Her gaze grows dim....
The dwarf, none other! Quite defenseless
Is she again; she sees his face
And moans, but by the good Lord’s grace
Dreams now enfold her, she falls senseless.

Poor child! What sight is there more chilling,
More certain to provoke our rage!
His brazen hand the puny mage
Lays on the charms of young Ludmila.
Is he-foul thought!-to taste of bliss?
But hark! A horn sounds. What means this?
A challenge to him? Yes! The midget’s....
Face shows cold fear. He quails, he fidgets...
A louder blare! Back on her head
The magic cap he puts, and, paling,
Is off, his beard behind him trailing,
To meet the fate that lies ahead.

RUSLAN AND LYUDMILA: CANTO THE FIFTH

How dear my princess is, one bows
‘Fore her, to sing her praises anxious:
She is so tender, unpretentious,
So faithful to her marriage vows;
Capricious, yes, but not unduly,
Which makes her only sweeter, truly.
Her ways delight us, they endear
Her to us, leaving us enchanted.
How to compare her with Delphire
Who’s so unfeeling, so flint-hearted!
By fate endowed has been the first
With mien and manner most beguiling;
To hear her speak, to see her smiling
Makes one’s heart throb, with love athirst.
Delphire now, spurs and whiskers added,
Would make a true Hussar. But stay!
Blest is he who at end of day
Has a Ludmila waiting for him
In some lone nook, and from her hears
That he’s her love, that she adores him.
And likewise blest is a Delphire’s
Admirer who is too clear-headed
To court her long and runs away.
But let’s not stray too far. Come, say,
\Who was it that the dwarf invited
So daringly to fight him? Who
Defiantly the trumpet blew
And by its sound the villain frightened ?-
Ruslan. Afire with vengeance, he
Has reached the midget’s castle. See?
Beneath the palisades he’s halted;
The trumpet’s sound comes storm-like, loud,
The steed paws at the snowy ground;
The prince awaits the dwarf. A bolt of
What seems like thunder deafens him.
A crushing blow! It has descended
Upon his helmet. Though defended
By this his head is, yet with dim,
Dull sight it is he upward gazes
And sees the dwarf above him fly,
A mammoth bludgeon lifted high.
Ruslan bends down, his great shield raises
And waves his sword, but Chernomor

Sweeps upward; then, appearing o'er
The prince again and downward swooping
He flies straight at him, whereupon
The latter feints, his rival duping,
And down the midget falls, straight on
The well-packed snow, with fear nigh frozen.
Ruslan dismounts, and, never pausing,
The space between them neatly cleared,
Grabs the magician by the beard!
The captive grunts and strains, and, heaving
Himself from off the bank of snow,
Sails skyward with our hero, leaving
The knight's astonished steed below.
They're 'neath the clouds, Ruslan still gripping
The beard and swinging in the air.
O'er seas and forests, o'er the bare
And rugged hills, their summits tipping,
The dwarf wings, and the stalwart knight,
Though numb and stiff his hand is growing,
Holds dogged on. The dwarf is quite
Used up by now and winded. Slowing
His progress through the air at length,
Amazed and awed by Russian strength,
He turns to our young knight and slyly
Says to him: "Prince, I'll do you ill

No more; in faith, I value highly
Young valour such as yours and will
Descend at once-on one condition...."
"Be silent, dastardly magician!"
Ruslan exclaims. "I will not treat
With my beloved bride's tormentor,
Nor into any dealings enter
With you! This sword-'tis only meet
Will punish you, and this most sure!
All of your wiles will serve you poorly!
Fly to the stars, if you so choose,
And still your whiskers you will lose!"
A horrid fear the wizard seizes,
In vain to free himself he tries,
The prince's grip is like a vise,
He tweaks the beard, and, gleeful, teases
The dwarf by plucking out the hairs
For two whole days the midget bear
Ruslan, but on the third, a'quiver
With fright, he cries: "Have mercy, pray!

I've no breath left at all. Deliver
Me from this plight without delay.
I'm in your hands. Where'er you say
We will alight." "Aha, you shiver!
Well, then, admit you're overcome
By Russian strength! And, villain, come,
To my Ludmila quickly take me!"

What is old Chernomor to do?
Obedience is his rival's due!
And so he's off, quite ill and shaken
And flying home. Midst hills of ice
He sets the prince down. In a trice
Ruslan the Head's sword raises briskly
With one strong hand; then, 'thout delay,
The other using, grasps the whiskers
And cuts them off like so much hay.
"There now," he tells him, "that will teach you!
Where is that handsome tuft you prize
Your strength and pride, you thieving creature?"
And to his helm the dwarfs beard ties.
He calls his bay who joins him, neighing,
Into a bag the pasty-faced
And half-dead wizard stuffs in haste,
The dancing steed no longer staying,
And starts uphill. The top. They ride
Up to the massive palace portal.
Ruslan-there is no happier mortal-
In hot impatience steps inside.
The throng of Moors and slave girls, seeing
His helm with beard graced, know the knight
To be the victor and are fleeing
Before him, fading out of sight
Like ghosts. Ruslan from hall to hall
Strides all alone; we hear him call
To his young spouse-the echo answers....
Is she not in the necromancer's
Great castle, then? The garden door
He opens wide, all expectation,
And on walks fast. His eye sweeps o'er
The empty grounds in agitation:
All's dead, naught stirs, still are the groves,
The leafy arbours and the coves;
The river banks, the slopes-deserted,
The valleys too.... He's disconcerted,
For nowhere e'en a trace is there

Of her he seeks, nor can he hear
The slightest sound. There passes through him
A sudden chill, the world grows dark
About him, and bleak thoughts come to him:
"Captivity.... of grief the mark....
A moment, and the waves-" These fancies,
How dismal they! His head hung, he
Stands like a rock there movelessly....
His very reason clouds, his senses
Fail him. He's all ablaze, he flames;
Despairing love's dark poison surges,
A mighty torrent, in his veins.
Is't not his lady who emerges
From darkness, is't not she who clings
To him?... He roars her name, he flings
Himself about, and, frenzied, raving,
His sword in mad abandon waving,
At boulders strikes and makes them roll
Downhill, and hacking, mowing, slashing,
Pavilions to the ground sends crashing,
Reduces grove and lea and knoll
To barren wastes, and tumbles bridges
Into the streams. The distant ridges
Send back the clang, the boom, the din;
Ruslan's sword sings and whistles. Grim
The scene is: all is devastation;
Insensed and maddened, our young knight
A victim seeks; on left and right
His sword the air cuts 'thout cessation....
Then all at once a chance thrust sends
The midget's magic headdress flying
From off his captive's brow; so ends
The spell cast on her. 'Fore him lying,
Enmeshed, Ruslan Ludmila sees.
He does not trust his eyes, he is
O'ercome by happiness, and, falling
At his bride's feet, tears up the nets,
And with his tears her limp hands wets,
And kisses them, her dear name calling.
But closed her lips are and her eyes,
And sensuous are the dreams she's seeing
That make her bosom sink and rise.
Fresh sorrow fills our knight's whole being
What means this sleep? Is she perchance
To be forever in a trance?...
But hark!-a friend's voice.... 'Tis the Finn,i

His councillor, who speaks to him:

“Take heart, O Prince! Upon your way
For home set off with fair Ludmila
And, strength of purpose your heart filling,
To love and honour faithful stay.
God’s bolt will strike, defeating malice;
You shall know peace, all will be well.
In Kiev, in Vladimir’s palace,
Your bride will wake, free of her spell.”

Ruslan, much cheered, no longer weary,
Lifts up his calmly sleeping bride,
And down a slope we see him guide
His horse and leave the mountain eyrie.

The midget to his saddle tied,
Across a vale, across a forest
He hurries, by no rival harassed.
In his arms his love rests, a precious
And welcome burden. Oh, how fresh is
Her face! The vernal dawn can be
No more so. ‘Gainst her husband’s shoulder
It rests, all sweet serenity....
The wind born in the barrens boldly
Plucks at her silky golden hair.
She sighs, the roses on her fair
Young cheeks play. Her beloved’s name
She whispers; ‘tis her dreams that bring her
His image and her heart inflame;
On her lips love’s avowals linger.
And he-he’s all fond contemplation
(The sight of her his spirit cheers) -
Oh, that sweet smile, those glistening tears,
That lovely bosom’s agitation!...

Meanwhile, by day, by night they journey
Up hill, down dale, but still unspanned
The distance is, still far the land
Which to behold Ruslan is yearning.
The maid sleeps on.... Did our young knight,
By fruitless, unassuaged desire
Worn-for it seems like years-not tire
Of guarding her? Did he delight
In virtuous dreams, immodest longing
Subduing and in no way wronging

His drowsy charge? So told are we
By one, a monk, who put in writing
The story of the prince, inviting
Inquisitive posterity
To profit by't. And I-I fully
Believe the annalist, for, truly,
What's love unshared?-An irksome thing
That can but little pleasure bring.
Ludmila's sleep did not resemble
Yours in the least, nymphs of the mead,
When languid springtime's call you heed
And in the cooling shade assemble
Of leafy trees.... I well recall
That happy day in early summer,
A tiny glade at evenfall,
And lovely Lida feigning slumber...
That kiss of mine, so light, so shy,
So hurried, young love's fresh, sweet token,
Could not awake the maid; unbroken
It left her sleep.... But, reader, why
Do I talk nonsense? Why this needless
Remembrance of a love long dead?
Forgot its joys, its pain, its heedless
And trying ways. To speak I'm led
Of those not long from my thoughts gone:
Ludmila, Chernomor, Ruslan.

A vale before them spreads; upon it
Rise clumps of spruces, and a mound
Looms farther out, its strangely round
And very dark and gloomy summit
Against the bright blue sky outlined.
Our youthful knight at once divined
That 'twas the Head before them shewn;
The steed speeds on, more restive growing;
Across the plain its great hooves thunder....
And lo!-they're close, they're nearly there;
Before them is the nine days' wonder,
It fixes them with glassy stare.
It is a thing repulsive, horrid:
Its inky hair falls on its forehead;
Drenched of all life, the hue of lead
Its face is, while the huge lips, parted,
And, like the cheeks, of colour bled,
Disclose clenched teeth; over the Head
Its hour of doom hangs. Our brave-hearted

And doughty knight rides up and faces
Its sightless gaze; the midget graces
The horse's rump. "Hail, Head!" Ruslan
Cries loudly, for the Head to hear him.
"He who betrayed you is undone!
Look! Here he is, none now need fear him!"
These words the Head revived
And in it roused new, fresh-born feeling.
It looked down at them, and, revealing
All of its anguish, moaned and sighed.
Our hero it had recognized,
And at the midget, nostrils swelling,
Stared, full of venom undisguised.
A fiery red its pale cheeks turned,
And in its death-glazed eyes there burned
A fury fierce and all-compelling.
In towering rage, incensed, confused,
It gnashed its giant teeth, and stuttered,
And smothered imprecations muttered,
And with its slowing tongue abused
Its hated brother.... But the pain,
Prolonged as it had been, was ceasing;
The dark, flushed face turned pale again,
And weaker grew the heavy breathing.
Its eyes rolled back, and soon Ruslan
And magus knew that all was over:
A spasm, and the Head was gone.
The knight rode off at once, much sobered;
As for the dwarf, he did not dare
To breathe, and, all his past strength losing,
To fiends in hell addressed a prayer,
The language of black magic using.

Where a small nameless streamlet wound,
Upon the sloping bank above it,
By dark and shaded forest covered,
There stood, nigh sunk into the ground,
A run-down hut. Thick pine-trees shaded
Its roof. The waters, somnolent,
Licked lazily at a much faded
And worn-down fence of reeds and went
With gentle murmur round it snaking;
The breeze blew softly, only making
A faint sound.... There it was that spread
A vale, and such was its seclusion,
It gave one the distinct illusion

That an unbroken silence had
Here from the birth of Time been reigning.
Ruslan now stopped his horse. The weaning
And peaceful night to morn gave way;
The grove and valley sparkling lay
“Neath veils of haze. His sleeping bride
The prince laid on the grass, and, seating
Himself beside her, close, he sighed
And looked at her, his young heart beating
With dulcet hope. Just then a boat’s
White sail he glimpses, and there float
A fisher’s song above the water
That drowns its gentler voice and sofu
The man has cast his nets, and, bendi
With zeal and promptness to the oar,
His humble vessel now is sending
Straight for the hut perched on the shore,
The good prince shades his eyes and watches:
There now-the boat the green bank touches,
And from the hut there hurries out
A sweet young maid; her hair about
Her shoulders loosely falls, she’s slender
And bare of breast, her smile is tender,
She’s charm itself. The two embrace
And on the bank sit, taking pleasure
In one another, in this place,
And in a quiet hour of leisure.
But whom to his intense surprise
Does Prince Ruslan now recognize
In this young fisherman? Dear Heaven!
It is Ratmir! Yes, it is he,
A man for exploit born, and even
For fame itself, one of his three
Sworn rivals. On this halcyon shore
He turned to fair Ludmila faithless,
And for his new love’s warm embraces
Relinquished fame for ever more.

Ruslan came up to him, astounded;
The recluse khan his rival knew.
A cry, and to the prince he flew
And joyous threw his arms around him
“You here, Ratmir? Lay you no claim
To greater things?” our hero asked him
“Have you found life like ours too tasking
Thus to reject your knightly fame?”

“In truth, Ruslan,” replied the khan,
“War and its phantom glory bore me;
Behind me have I left my stormy,
Tumultuous years. This peace, this calm,
And love, and pastimes innocent
Bring me a hundred-fold more gladness

My lust for combat being spent,
No tribute do I pay to madness;
Rich am I, friend, in happiness,
And have all else forgot, yes, even
Ludmila’s charms.” “I’m glad, God bless
You for’t, Ratmir, for fate has given
Her back to me....” “You have your bride
With you!” amazed, the young khan cried.
“What luck! I too once longed to free her....
Where is she, then? I’d like to see her-
But no! I’ll not betray my mate;
Made mine by a forgiving fate,
She wrought this change in me, the fervour
Of eager youth in me revived;
Because I’m hers, because I serve her
I know true love and am alive.
Twelve sirens who professed a longing
For me without regret I spurned;
My heart to none of them belonging,
I left them never to return;
I left their merry home, a castle
That in a shaded forest nestled,
My sword and helm laid down, and foe
And fame forgot. ‘Twas, my friend, so
That, peace and solitude embracing,
A kithless hermit I became,
And dwell, to no one known by name,
With her I love....”

Lpon him gazing,
The shepherdess ne er left his side;
Now smiled she sweetly, now she sighed....
On, on, unseen, the hours went racing.
Their hearts by friendship warmed, till night
Set in, o’er all its patterns tracing,
The fisher sat beside the knight....
It’s still and dark. The half-moon’s light,
Pale just at first, is brighter growing.
Time to be off! A cover throwing

With gentle hand o'er his young bride,
Ruslan goes off to mount his steed.
The khan, bemused, preoccupied,
In spirit follows him; indeed,
Good luck in all his daring ventures
He wishes him and happiness
And his proud dreams and past adventures
Recalls with fleeting wistfulness....

Why is it Fortune has not granted
My fickle Lyre the right to praise
Heroic deeds alone? Why can't I
Of love and friendship, that these days
Are out of fashion, chant? A bard
Of Truth, why must I (God, it's hard!)
Denounce spite, venom, vice, am fated
In my sincere and artless songs
To bare for those to come the wrongs
By crafty demons perpetrated?

Farlaf, Ludmila's worthless wooer,
A wretch, still eager to pursue her,
But all his dreams of glory gone,
Out in the wilds lived, isolated
From all mankind and known to none,
And for Nahina's coming waited.
Nor did he, reader, wait in vain:
For here she is, the ancient dame!
A solemn hour. "You know me, stalwart,"
She says to him. "Now mount, and forward!
Come after me." And lo!-with that
She turns herself into a cat,
And then, the charger saddled, races
Off and away. She's followed by
Farlaf on horseback. Through the mazes
Of gloomy forests their paths lie.

Clad in night's haze that never lifted,
The vale lay tranquil, slumber-bound,
And, veiled in mist, the pale moon drifted
From cloud to cloud and lit the mound
With fitful rays. Beneath it seated,
Our hero, staying at her side,
Kept vigil o'er his sleeping bride.
By tristful thought all but defeated
The poor prince was; within him crowded

Dreams, fancies and imaginings;
Beginning gently to enshroud him,
Above him hovered sleep's cool wings.
His closing eyes upon the sweet
Young maid he tried to fix, but, feeling
Unable this to do, sank, reeling,
By slumber captured, at her feet.
A dream comes to him, bodeful, gloomy:
He seems to see Ludmila, his
Sweet princess, pale-faced and unmoving,
Pause on the brink of an abyss.
She vanishes, and he is standing
Above the dreaded chasm alone,
And from it comes, the spirit rending,
A call for help, a piteous moan....
'Tis she! He jumps, and flies apace,
To pierce the darkness vainly straining.
Through fathomless, night-mantled space,
And then, at long last bottom gaining,
Steps on hard ground.... Vladimir's palace
Before him towers.... He enters. There is
The old Prince with his grey-haired knights,
His twelve young sons, his guests, all seated
At festive tables. No smile lights
Vladimir's face. He does not greet him
And seems as wroth as on the dread
And well-remembered day of parting.
All silent stay, no banter starting,
No talk. But there-is not the dead
Rogdai among them, his past rival,
The one that he in battle slew?
Quite unaware of his arrival,
A froth-topped goblet of some brew
He gaily drains. Surprised, Ruslan
Espies Ratmir, the youthful khan,
And others, friends and foes, ringed near him;
The gusli tinkle, old Bayan
Of deeds heroic chants-to hear him
Is strange. Farlaf now enters, leading
Ludmila in. The Prince, receding
Into himself, his grey head bowed,
Says not a word. The silent crowd
Of boyars, princes, knights, concealing
What so disquiets, so dismays
And frightens them, quite moveless stays.
Then, in an instant, all is gone....

A deathly chill o'er his heart stealing,
Ruslan now finds himself alone.
From his eyes tortured tears are flowing
Sleep fetters him, he tries to break
Its leaden chains, but fails, and, knowing
'Tis but a dream, cannot awake.
Above the hill the moon looms pale;
Dark are the forests; in the vale
Dead silence reigns, and there, astride
His steed, we see the traitor ride.
A glade and barrow he has sighted;
Stretched at his love's feet, on the ground
Ruslan sleeps, and around the mound
His stallion walks. Farlaf, much frightened
Looks on a'tremble. In the mist
The witch is lost. No signal sounding,
The bridle dropping from his fist,
He rides up closer, his heart pounding
And leans across, his broadsword bared,
To cleave the knight in two prepared
Without a fight. His presence scenting,
The stallion whinnies angrily
And paws the ground. But what's to be,
There is, I fear me, no preventing!
Ruslan hears nothing, for sleep on him,
Weighs heavily, a cruel vise.
Spurred by the wdtch, Farlafs upon him,
And plunging deep his sharp steel thrice
Into his breast, his priceless prey
Lifts up and, weak-kneed, rides away.
The hours flew. Beneath the barrow
The whole night long our hero lay;
The blood from his wounds oozed in narrow,
Unending streamlets.... Dawn arrived,
And with its coming he revived,
Let out a heavy, muffled groan,
About him peered, and, vainly trying
To lift himself and stand, fell prone,
Like one already dead-or dying.

RUSLAN AND LYUDMILA: CANTO THE SIXTH

You bid me, O my heart's desire,
Take up my light and carefree lyre
And chant the lays of old, my leisure
Devoting to a faithful Muse.
Do you not know, then, that I treasure
Love's raptures more and frankly choose
To spend but little of my time
With that long cherished lyre of mine,
That being now at odds with rumour
And drunk with bliss, I'm in no humour
To welcome toil or harmony's
Sweet, winsome strains.... By you I breathe,
And though loud are fame's prideful speeches,
Their sound my ear but faintly reaches.
Of genius the secret fires
Are dead; its thoughts are left behind.
Love, love alone my heart inspires,
Its wild desires invade my mind.
But you-you'd have me sing; my stories
Of loves long past and erstwhile glories
Appeal to you; you wish to hear
Of Prince Ruslan and of Ludmila,
The dwarf, Nahina, Vladimir,
And to the old Finn's woes a willing
And patient ear are glad to lend.
The tales I spun would sometimes tend
To make you feel a trifle sleepy
Though with a smile you listened e'er.
At other times I was aware
How tenderly-this felt I deeply -
Your loving gaze the singer's met.
Enamored babbler, I will let
My fingers pass over the lazy
And stubborn strings, and at your feet,
The minstrel's customary seat,
Strum loudly, my young champion praising.

But where's Ruslan? Out in the field,
His blood long cold and long congealed,
He sprawls, a raven o'er him swooping,
Upon the grass lie limp and drooping
The whiskers serving to adorn
His helm of steel; mute is his horn.

His golden mane no longer waving,
Around the prince his mount walks gravely,
Head lowered; in his once bright eye
The light has died. Not knowing why
The prince lies so, he is unwilling
To play and waits for him to wake.
In vain! The prince won't move or take
The sword up: deep his sleep and chilling.

And Chernomor? There, in the bag,
He lies, forgotten by the hag,
And knowing naught, his grudges nurses;
Worn, sleepy, bored to tears, he curses
My youthful hero and his bride....
Then, not a sound his ears assailing
For hours on end, he peeps outside-
A miracle, no less! Words fail him.
For in a pool of blood the knight
Lies dead, and no one is in sight;
Ludmila's gone, the field's deserted.
The wizard crows in joy. "I'm free!"
He cries. "All danger is averted."
But he is wrong, as we shall see.

Farlaf, by old Nahina aided,
On horseback makes for Kiev; he
Is full of hope and fear. The maiden
Across the saddle lies asleep.
Ahead, the Dnieper, cold and deep,
Already shows, its waters flowing
Mid native leas; the city's glowing
Gold domes and wooden walls draw near.
Here is the gate! The townsfolk cheer,
And mill about, excitement mounting.
Word to the Prince is sent. Before
The eyes of all, at palace door
We see the knavish youth dismounting.

Meanwhile, Vladimir, called Bright Sun,
Was in his lofty terem sitting,
And, filled with sorrow unremitting,
On his loss brooding. Round him, glum,
His knights and boyars sat, a pompous,
Stone-visaged lot. A sudden rumpus
Is heard without: yells, shouts, a din;

The portal opes. A knight comes in.
Who can he be? Why the intrusion?
All rise. A murmur fills the room,
Grows louder. General confusion.
Ludmila rescued! And by whom! -
Farlaf, of all men! Strange! The Prince,
Changed wholly now of countenance,
Starts from his chair and, heavy-footed
Hastes to his long-lost daughter's side.
He touches her; she stirs not; muted
Her breathing is. Ruslan's young bride
Rests in the killer's arms unfeeling,
The hands of magic her lips sealing,
Its powers holding her spellbound.
His men the aged Prince watch dully
As, anxious-eyed and melancholy,
Farlaf he queries, though no sound
Escapes him."Aye, the maiden sleeps,"
A finger holding to his lips,
Without a qualm, Farlaf says slyly.
'T found her, Prince, held by a wily
And wicked goblin captive in
A Murom forest. Bound to win
Was valour, and it did. We battled
For three long days. Above us two
The moon rose thrice; then all was settled:
He fell. The sleeping maid to you
I rushed to bring from that forsaken
And lonely spot. W^hen she's to waken
And with whose help is only known
To fate, whose ways are dark. Alone
Hope, yes, and patient meditation
Can offer us some consolation."

Throughout the town there flew ere long
The fateful news, all hearts distressing.
The square filled with a seething throng
Of townsfolk, toward the palace pressing.
A house of grief, it opes its doors
To all, and there the crowd now pours
To see the youthful princess sleeping
On a raised couch clothed in brocade,
The knights and princes o'er the maid
With sombre faces vigil keeping.
Horns, tympan, gusli, tambourines
And trumpets sound. The Prince, grief- worn,

His grey head 'gainst his child's feet leans
With silent tears. Beside him, torn
By mute remorse, dismay, self-pity,
Farlaf stands trembling, white of face,
His brashness gone without a trace.

Soon darkness fell, but in- the city
None closed an eye, and all throughout
The night discussed, grouped near their houses,
How it could all have come about,
Some husbands lingering without
And quite forgetting their young spouses,
But when the twin-horned moon on high
Met dawn, its bright rays slowly paling,
There rose throughout a hue and cry,
A din, a clang of arms, a wailing.
A new alarm! And, shaken, all
Come scrambling up the city wall.
A mist the river cloaks. Beyond it
They see white tents, the glint of shields,
Dust raised by horsemen in the field
And moving carts: they are surrounded;
Up on the hilltops campfires flame...
To such scenes Kiev is no stranger;
It's clear the city is in danger,
The Pechenegs attack again!

While this went on, the Finn, a seer
And ruler of the spirits, waited,
Withdrawn from all the world, to hear
Of happenings anticipated,
Foreseen by him.... Calm, tranquil he:
What is ordained is bound to be.

Deep in the steppe, sun-parched and soundless,
Beyond a chain of hills, the boundless
Realm of wild gales and windstorms, where
The aweless witch will scarcely dare
To walk with the approach of evening,
A vale lies hid that boasts two springs:
One leaps o'er stones and plays and sings,
For it is rich in water living,
The other o'er the valley bed
Flows sluggishly, its waters dead.
All's silence here, no breezes blowing
That coolness bring; no busy bird

To chatter or to sing is heard;
No age-old pines on sand dunes growing
Are seen to stir; no fawn,, no deer
Drinks of these waters. It is here
On guard two spirits have been standing
Since Time began, the fear commanding
Of all. Before them now the Finn
Appears, two jugs, both empty, bearing;
Their trance is broken, and from him
They flee, to other parts repairing.
He fills the vessels with the pure,
Sweet water 'fore him softly streaming,
And then is off, to vanish seeming
Into thin air. A second or
Two seconds pass, and in the vale
Where, motionless and deathly pale,
Ruslan lies, he now stands. First he
Dead water o'er the knight sprays, causing
The gaping wounds to heal and rosy
The grey lips turning suddenly;
With living water then he sprays
The comely but still lifeless face —
And death is vanquished, gone its rigor;
Ruslan, full of fresh strength and vigour,
Stands up; life courses in his veins,
The past a ghastly dream remains
Behind him, dim.... O'erjoyed, he faces
The rising day that 'fore him blazes.
But he's alone.... Where's his young bride?..
Of fear a tremor passes through him;
Then his heart leaps, for at his side
He sees the Finn who now says to him:
"It's as Fate wills. Bliss is in store
For you, my son, but not before
A bloody feast you'll have attended
And with your sword put down the foe.
You'll see your bride and gladness know,
Once peace on Kiev has descended.
Here is a ring for you. Her brow
Touch with it, and from sleep she'll waken.
The very sight of you, I vow,
Will leave your foes confused and shaken
And put the lot of them to flight.
Then will maliciousness and spite,
My friend, and all things evil perish.
Be worthy of your love and cherish

Your bride, Ruslan.... And now goodbye...
Beyond the grave will you and I
Meet, not before.” With this he vanished,
And Prince Ruslan, all his fears banished,
O’erjoyed to be to life restored,
Stands with his arms stretched out toward
His friend.... Alas! The grassy lea is
Deserted quite save for the bay
(The dwarfs still in the bag) who whinnies
And rears and shakes his mane. Away
The prince now makes to go, and, springing
Into the saddle, grips the reins.
He’s hale and sound. Across the plains
And woods we see him boldly winging.

And what of Kiev, by the foe
Beleaguered?... There, filled with suspense,
High on its walls and battlements,
The townsfolk crowd. The fields below
Surveying fearfully, they wait
God’s smiting hand, the hand of fate.
Subdued laments come from the houses;
No sound the fear-hushed byways rouses.
Beside his child in earnest prayer
Vladimir kneels, plunged deep in sorrow.
His knights and noblemen and their
Great warrior-host for war prepare:
The bloody fray’s set for the morrow! ‘

Dawn broke, and down the hills the foes
Poured, armed with swords and spears and bows;
They surged relentless, never slowing,
Wave upon wave across the plains
And toward the city walls came flowing.
The Kiev trumpets started blowing,
And out its men rushed, with the chains
Of the attackers boldly clashing.
The fray begins! In sudden fear,
As death they scent, steeds neigh and rear;
The riders, forward headlong dashing,
In battle meet, their steel swords flashing.
Sent forth in clouds, the arrows hum;
The fields turn red: with blood they run.
A man who’s lost his war-horse faces
A horseman: which of them will smite
The other first? In wild-eyed fright

Across the field a charger races.
Death. Cries for help and battle-calls.
A Pecheneg, a Russian falls.
One's by an arrow pierced swift-flying;
Another's maced, his groan unheard;
A foeman's shield has crushed a third,
And, trampled on, he lies there, dying.
The fray went on till dark set in,
But neither warring side could win....
The slain in mounds lay; blood flowed freely;
Sleep claimed the living, all concealing
From their sight. Through the fearful night's
Long hours the wounded moaned in pain,
And one could hear the Russian knights
To their God pray and speak His name.

But paler turned the shade of morn,
And in the swiftly-flowing river
The rippling waves seemed made of silver:
Day, thickly cloaked in mist, was born.
The hills and forests slowly brightened;
The skies, by sun their blueness heightened,
Broke free of sleep.... Yet moveless still
The battlefield remained until
The hostile camp awoke abruptly,
A challenge followed the alarm,
And warfare once again erupting,
Old Kiev lost its short-lived calm.
All rush to watch the scene below
And see a knight in flaming mail
Through ranks of foemen blaze a trail,
See him descend on them and mow
Them boldly down-see his sword flash
And thrust and stab and cut and slash....
It was Ruslan. The dwarf behind him,
His horn triumphantly he blows
And like a thunderbolt the foes
Strikes down; where'er it is we find him
Borne by his steed, the infidels
Row upon row he vengeful fells,
And awing the enthralled beholders,
With whistling sword parts heads from shoulders....

Where'er he passes, bodies strew
The battleground, crushed, headless, dying,
With spears and arrows near them lying

And heaps of armour. Then, anew
The trumpet's battle call remorseless
Sounds, and behold!-the Slavic forces
To join Ruslan on horseback fly.
A fierce fray follows.... Pagan, die!
The Pechenegs, those savage raiders,
Round up their scattered horses and
In panic flee. The feared invaders
Of Russ. they can no more withstand
The Slavs' attack; their wild yells carry
Over the dusty field; their hordes,
Cut down by Kiev's smiting swords,
The fires of the inferno face....
Kiev exults.... And now our daring
Young prince-his horse he sits with grace-
On through its gate rides, proudly bearing
His sword of victory; his lance
Shines star-like, drawing every glance;
The blood is seen to trickle down
His heavy mail of bronze, he's wearing
A helm whose top the whiskers crown
Of Chernomor. And all about him
There's noise and gaiety and shouting.
The very air with his name rings....
Toward the Prince's house on wings
Of hope he flies, and goes inside.
Here now's the silent chamber where
Sleeps fair Ludmila; at her side
Her father stands, deep lines of care
Etched on his face. There's no one near him,
No friend to comfort or to cheer him,
For they have all gone off to war....
Farlaf, alone the call of duty
Denying, at the chamber door
Kept vigil; in him deeply rooted
Was an aversion for things martial,
To calm and comfort he was partial,
And very much so. Seeing who
Was there before, him, he surrendered
To fear; his blood froze; speechless rendered,
On to his knees he fell.... He knew
That retribution was his due,
That he was doomed. Ruslan, however,
The magic ring just then recalled
And, faithful to his love as ever,
Her pale brow touched with it. Behold!-

She oped her eyes and sighed in wonder:
Night had been long, too long.... It seemed
That she was still entranced, still under
The spell of something she had dreamed.
And then her vision cleared-she knew him!
And fell into his arms, and to him
Clung lovingly. By joy made numb,
He saw naught, heard naught, his heart raced.
And Prince Vladimir, overcome,
Wept as his dear ones he embraced.

You will have guessed, and without fail,
How ends my all too drawn-out tale.
Flown was Vladimir's wrath ungrounded;
Farlaf confessed his guilt; Ruslan,
So happy was he, in him found it
All to forgive; the dwarf, undone,
His powers lost, was added to
Vladimir-Bright Sun's retinue;
To mark an end to tribulation
A sumptuous feast of celebration
The Prince held in his chamber high,
By friends and family surrounded.

The ways and deeds of days gone by,
A narrative on legend founded.

EPILOGUE

Thus, the world's mindless dweller, spending
Life's precious hours in idle peace,
Its strings my lyre to me lending,
I sang the lore of bygone days.
I sang, the painful blows forgetting
Of fate that blindly o'er us rules,
The wiles of frivolous maids, the petty
And thoughtless jibes of prating fools.
My mind, on wings of fancy soaring,
To parts ethereal was borne,
While all unknown there gathered o'er me
The dark clouds of a mighty storm....
And I was lost.... But you who always
Watched o'er me in my earlier years,
You, blessed friendship, giving solace
To one whose heart deep sorrow sears!-
You calmed the raging storm, and, heeding
My spirit's call, brought peace to me;
You saved me-saved my treasured freedom,
Of fiery youth the deity!
Far from the social whirl, the Neva
Behind me left, forgotten even
By rumour, here am I where loom
Caucasian peaks in prideful gloom.
Atop high steep, mid downward tumbling
Cascades and cataracts of stone,
I stand and drink it all in dumbly,
And revel, to reflection prone,
In nature's dark and savage beauty;
To wounding thought my soul's still wed,
Within it sadness lives, deep-rooted,
But the poetic fires are dead,

In vain I seek for inspiration:
Gone is the blithe and happy time
Of love, of merry dreams, of rhyme,
Of all that filled me with elation.
Sweet rapture's span has not been long,
Flown from me has the Muse of song,
Of softly spoken incantation....

LIST OF POEMS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER



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A STUDY
A WINTER MORNING
A WISH
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CONSOLATION
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ELEGY: HAPPY WHO TO HIMSELF CONFESS
ELEGY: HUSHED I SOON SHALL BE
ELEGY: THE EXTINGUISHED JOY OF CRAZY YEARS
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RUSLAN AND LYUDMILA: CANTO THE FIRST
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THE BRONZE HORSEMAN. CANTO THE SECOND.
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THE BURNT LETTER
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TO —— (KERN)
TO —— (KERN) COMPARISON
TO A BABE
TO THE CALUMNIATORS OF RUSSIA

TO THE SEA
VAIN GIFT, GIFT OF CHANCE
K ***

The Verse Novel



Imperial Lyceum in Tsarskoe Selo — where Pushkin studied and developed his poetry

EUGENE ONEGIN



Translated by Henry Spalding

Regarded by many as Pushkin's masterpiece, *Eugene Onegin* is a novel in verse, published in serial form between 1825 and 1832. It consists of 389 stanzas of iambic tetrameter with an unusual rhyme scheme, using a blend of feminine and masculine rhymes, which has since become known as the 'Onegin stanza' or the 'Pushkin sonnet'. This innovative rhyme scheme, as well as the natural tone and diction have helped to establish Pushkin as the acknowledged master of Russian poetry. *Eugene Onegin* is also admired for its deft handling of verse narrative and its exploration of important themes, such as death, the nature of love, *ennui* and the defying of conventions.

Set in the 1820s, the story is told by an educated and sensitive narrator, similar to Pushkin himself. The character Eugene Onegin is portrayed as being a bored Saint Petersburg socialite, whose life consists of balls, concerts, parties and little more. When he inherits a landed estate from his uncle, he moves to the country, where he strikes up a friendship with his neighbour, the young poet Vladimir Lensky. One day, Lensky takes Onegin to dine with the family of his fiancée, the sociable but superficial Olga Larina. At this meeting he also catches a glimpse of Olga's sister Tatyana, one of Pushkin's most unique and famous characters...

ЕВГЕНІЙ ОНЪГІНЪ,

РОМАНЪ ВЪ СТИХАХЪ.

СОЧИНЕНІЕ

АЛЕКСАНДРА ПУШКИНА.

САНКТПЕТЕРБУРГЪ.

ВЪ ТИПОГРАФІИ АЛЕКСАНДРА СМЕРДИНА.
1833.

The first edition's title page

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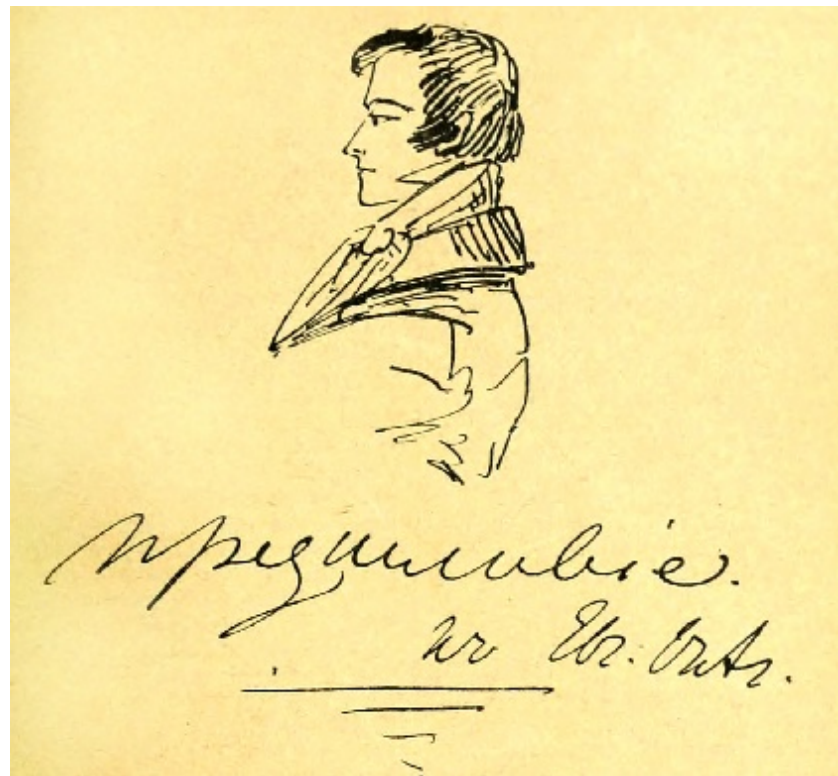
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Pushkin's own illustration of the character Eugene Onegin, 1830



A late nineteenth century illustration



'Onegin' by Elena Samokish-Sudkovskaya, 1908

PREFACE

Eugene Oneguine, the chief poetical work of Russia's greatest poet, having been translated into all the principal languages of Europe except our own, I hope that this version may prove an acceptable contribution to literature. Tastes are various in matters of poetry, but the present work possesses a more solid claim to attention in the series of faithful pictures it offers of Russian life and manners. If these be compared with Mr. Wallace's book on Russia, it will be seen that social life in that empire still preserves many of the characteristics which distinguished it half a century ago — the period of the first publication of the latter cantos of this poem.

Many references will be found in it to our own country and its literature. Russian poets have carefully plagiarized the English — notably Joukovski. Pushkin, however, was no plagiarist, though undoubtedly his mind was greatly influenced by the genius of Byron — more especially in the earliest part of his career. Indeed, as will be remarked in the following pages, he scarcely makes an effort to disguise this fact.

The biographical sketch is of course a mere outline. I did not think a longer one advisable, as memoirs do not usually excite much interest till the subjects of them are pretty well known. In the "notes" I have endeavored to elucidate a somewhat obscure subject. Some of the poet's allusions remain enigmatical to the present day. The point of each sarcasm naturally passed out of mind together with the society against which it was levelled. If some of the versification is rough and wanting in "go," I must plead in excuse the difficult form of the stanza, and in many instances the inelastic nature of the subject matter to be versified. Stanza XXXV Canto II forms a good example of the latter difficulty, and is omitted in the German and French versions to which I have had access. The translation of foreign verse is comparatively easy so long as it is confined to conventional poetic subjects, but when it embraces abrupt scraps of conversation and the description of local customs it becomes a much more arduous affair. I think I may say that I have adhered closely to the text of the original.

The following foreign translations of this poem have appeared:

1. French prose. *Oeuvres choisies de Pouchekine*. H. Dupont. Paris, 1847.
2. German verse. *A. Puschkin's poetische Werke*. F. Bodenstedt. Berlin, 1854.
3. Polish verse. *Eugeniusz Oniegin*. Roman Aleksandra Puskina. A. Sikorski. Vilnius, 1847.
4. Italian prose. *Racconti poetici di A. Puschkin*, tradotti da A. Delatre. Firenze, 1856.

London, May 1881.

MON PORTRAIT

Written by the poet at the age of 15.

Vous me demandez mon portrait,
Mais peint d'apres nature:
Mon cher, il sera bientot fait,
Quoique en miniature.

Je suis un jeune polisson
Encore dans les classes;
Point sot, je le dis sans facon,
Et sans fâdes grimaces.

Oui! il ne fut babillard
Ni docteur de Sorbonne,
Plus ennuyeux et plus braillard
Que moi-meme en personne.

Ma taille, a celle des plus longs,
Elle n'est point egalee;
J'ai le teint frais, les cheveux blonds,
Et la tete bouclee.

J'aime et le monde et son fracas,
Je hais la solitude;
J'abhorre et noises et debats,
Et tant soit peu l'etude.

Spectacles, bals, me plaisent fort,
Et d'apres ma pensee,
Je dirais ce que j'aime encore,
Si je n'etais au Lycee.

Apres cela, mon cher ami,
L'on peut me reconnaitre,
Oui! tel que le bon Dieu me fit,
Je veux toujours paraître.

Vrai demon, par l'espieglerie,
Vrai singe par sa mine,
Beaucoup et trop d'etourderie,
Ma foi! voila Pouchekine.

Note: Russian proper names to be pronounced as in French (the nasal sound of m and n excepted) in the following translation. The accent, which is very

arbitrary in the Russian language, is indicated unmistakably in a rhythmical composition.

EUGENE ONEGUINE

Petri de vanite, il avait encore plus de cette espece d'orgueil, qui fait avouer avec la meme indifference les bonnes comme les mauvaises actions, suite d'un sentiment de superiorite, peut-etre imaginaire. — *Tire d'une lettre particuliere.*

CANTO THE FIRST

‘The Spleen’

‘He rushes at life and exhausts the passions.’

Prince Viazemski

Canto the First

I

“My uncle’s goodness is extreme,
If seriously he hath disease;
He hath acquired the world’s esteem
And nothing more important sees;
A paragon of virtue he!
But what a nuisance it will be,
Chained to his bedside night and day
Without a chance to slip away.
Ye need dissimulation base
A dying man with art to soothe,
Beneath his head the pillow smooth,
And physic bring with mournful face,
To sigh and meditate alone:
When will the devil take his own!”

II

Thus mused a madcap young, who drove
Through clouds of dust at postal pace,
By the decree of Mighty Jove,
Inheritor of all his race.
Friends of Liudmila and Ruslan,(1)
Let me present ye to the man,
Who without more prevarication
The hero is of my narration!
Oneguine, O my gentle readers,
Was born beside the Neva, where
It may be ye were born, or there
Have shone as one of fashion’s leaders.
I also wandered there of old,
But cannot stand the northern cold.(2)

[Note 1: Ruslan and Liudmila, the title of Pushkin’s first important work, written 1817-20. It is a tale relating the adventures of the knight-errant Ruslan in search of his fair lady Liudmila, who has been carried off by a kaldoon, or magician.]

[Note 2: Written in Bessarabia.]

III

Having performed his service truly,
Deep into debt his father ran;
Three balls a year he gave ye duly,
At last became a ruined man.
But Eugene was by fate preserved,
For first “madame” his wants observed,
And then “monsieur” supplied her place;(3)
The boy was wild but full of grace.
“Monsieur l’Abbe,” a starving Gaul,
Fearing his pupil to annoy,
Instructed jestingly the boy,
Morality taught scarce at all;
Gently for pranks he would reprove
And in the Summer Garden rove.

[Note 3: In Russia foreign tutors and governesses are commonly styled “monsieur” or “madame.”]

IV

When youth’s rebellious hour drew near
And my Eugene the path must trace —
The path of hope and tender fear —
Monsieur clean out of doors they chase.
Lo! my Oneguine free as air,
Cropped in the latest style his hair,
Dressed like a London dandy he
The giddy world at last shall see.
He wrote and spoke, so all allowed,
In the French language perfectly,
Danced the mazurka gracefully,
Without the least constraint he bowed.
What more’s required? The world replies,
He is a charming youth and wise.

V

We all of us of education
A something somehow have obtained,
Thus, praised be God! a reputation
With us is easily attained.
Oneguine was — so many deemed
[Unerring critics self-esteeming],

Pedantic although scholar like,
In truth he had the happy trick
Without constraint in conversation
Of touching lightly every theme.
Silent, oracular ye'd see him
Amid a serious disputation,
Then suddenly discharge a joke
The ladies' laughter to provoke.

VI

Latin is just now not in vogue,
But if the truth I must relate,
Oneguine knew enough, the rogue
A mild quotation to translate,
A little Juvenal to spout,
With "vale" finish off a note;
Two verses he could recollect
Of the Aeneid, but incorrect.
In history he took no pleasure,
The dusty chronicles of earth
For him were but of little worth,
Yet still of anecdotes a treasure
Within his memory there lay,
From Romulus unto our day.

VII

For empty sound the rascal swore he
Existence would not make a curse,
Knew not an iamb from a choree,
Although we read him heaps of verse.
Homer, Theocritus, he jeered,
But Adam Smith to read appeared,
And at economy was great;
That is, he could elucidate
How empires store of wealth unfold,
How flourish, why and wherefore less
If the raw product they possess
The medium is required of gold.
The father scarcely understands
His son and mortgages his lands.

VIII

But upon all that Eugene knew
I have no leisure here to dwell,

But say he was a genius who
In one thing really did excel.
It occupied him from a boy,
A labour, torment, yet a joy,
It whiled his idle hours away
And wholly occupied his day —
The amatory science warm,
Which Ovid once immortalized,
For which the poet agonized
Laid down his life of sun and storm
On the steppes of Moldavia lone,
Far from his Italy — his own.(4)

[Note 4: Referring to Tomi, the reputed place of exile of Ovid. Pushkin, then residing in Bessarabia, was in the same predicament as his predecessor in song, though he certainly did not plead guilty to the fact, since he remarks in his ode to Ovid: To exile self-consigned, With self, society, existence, discontent, I visit in these days, with melancholy mind, The country whereunto a mournful age thee sent. Ovid thus enumerates the causes which brought about his banishment: "Perdiderint quum me duo crimina, carmen et error; Alterius facti culpa silenda mihi est." Ovidii Nasonis Tristium, lib. ii. 207.]

IX

How soon he learnt deception's art,
Hope to conceal and jealousy,
False confidence or doubt to impart,
Sombre or glad in turn to be,
Haughty appear, subservient,
Obsequious or indifferent!
What languor would his silence show,
How full of fire his speech would glow!
How artless was the note which spoke
Of love again, and yet again;
How deftly could he transport feign!
How bright and tender was his look,
Modest yet daring! And a tear
Would at the proper time appear.

X

How well he played the greenhorn's part
To cheat the inexperienced fair,
Sometimes by pleasing flattery's art,
Sometimes by ready-made despair;
The feeble moment would espy
Of tender years the modesty
Conquer by passion and address,

Await the long-delayed caress.
Avowal then 'twas time to pray,
Attentive to the heart's first beating,
Follow up love — a secret meeting
Arrange without the least delay —
Then, then — well, in some solitude
Lessons to give he understood!

XI

How soon he learnt to titillate
The heart of the inveterate flirt!
Desirous to annihilate
His own antagonists expert,
How bitterly he would malign,
With many a snare their pathway line!
But ye, O happy husbands, ye
With him were friends eternally:
The crafty spouse caressed him, who
By Faublas in his youth was schooled,(5)
And the suspicious veteran old,
The pompous, swaggering cuckold too,
Who floats contentedly through life,
Proud of his dinners and his wife!

[Note 5: Les Aventures du Chevalier de Faublas, a romance of a loose character by Jean Baptiste Louvet de Couvray, b. 1760, d. 1797, famous for his bold oration denouncing Robespierre, Marat and Danton.]

XII

One morn whilst yet in bed he lay,
His valet brings him letters three.
What, invitations? The same day
As many entertainments be!
A ball here, there a children's treat,
Whither shall my rascalion flit?
Whither shall he go first? He'll see,
Perchance he will to all the three.
Meantime in matutinal dress
And hat surnamed a "Bolivar"(6)
He hies unto the "Boulevard,"
To loiter there in idleness
Until the sleepless Breguet chime(7)
Announcing to him dinner-time.

[Note 6: A la "Bolivar," from the founder of Bolivian independence.]

[Note 7: *M. Breguet, a celebrated Parisian watchmaker — hence a slang term for a watch.*]

XIII

‘Tis dark. He seats him in a sleigh,
 “Drive on!” the cheerful cry goes forth,
 His furs are powdered on the way
 By the fine silver of the north.
 He bends his course to Talon’s, where(8)
 He knows Kaverine will repair.(9)
 He enters. High the cork arose
 And Comet champagne foaming flows.
 Before him red roast beef is seen
 And truffles, dear to youthful eyes,
 Flanked by immortal Strasbourg pies,
 The choicest flowers of French cuisine,
 And Limburg cheese alive and old
 Is seen next pine-apples of gold.

[Note 8: Talon, a famous Saint Petersburg restaurateur.]

[Note 9: Paul Petrovitch Kaverine, a friend for whom Pushkin in his youth appears to have entertained great respect and admiration. He was an officer in the Hussars of the Guard, and a noted “dandy” and man about town. The poet on one occasion addressed the following impromptu to his friend’s portrait: “Within him daily see the the fires of punch and war, Upon the fields of Mars a gallant warrior; A faithful friend to friends, of ladies torturer; But ever the Hussar.”]

XIV

Still thirst fresh draughts of wine compels
To cool the cutlets' seething grease,
When the sonorous Breguet tells
Of the commencement of the piece.
A critic of the stage malicious,
A slave of actresses capricious,
Oneguine was a citizen
Of the domains of the side-scene.
To the theatre he repairs
Where each young critic ready stands,
Capers applauds with clap of hands,
With hisses Cleopatra scares,
Moina recalls for this alone
That all may hear his voice's tone.

XV

Thou fairy-land! Where formerly
Shone pungent Satire's dauntless king,
Von Wisine, friend of liberty,
And Kniajnine, apt at copying.
The young Simeonova too there
With Ozeroff was wont to share
Applause, the people's donative.
There our Katenine did revive
Corneille's majestic genius,
Sarcastic Shakhovskoi brought out
His comedies, a noisy rout,
There Didelot became glorious,
There, there, beneath the side-scene's shade
The drama of my youth was played.(10)

[Note 10: Denis Von Wisine (1741-92), a favourite Russian dramatist. His first comedy "The Brigadier," procured him the favour of the second Catherine. His best, however, is the "Minor" (Nedorosl). Prince Potemkin, after witnessing it, summoned the author, and greeted him with the exclamation, "Die now, Denis!" In fact, his subsequent performances were not of equal merit. Jacob Borissovitch Kniajnine (1742-91), a clever adapter of French tragedy. Simeonova, a celebrated tragic actress, who retired from the stage in early life and married a Prince Gagarine. Ozeroff, one of the best-known Russian dramatists of the period; he possessed more originality than Kniajnine. "Oedipus in Athens," "Fingal," "Demetrius Donskoi," and "Polyxena," are the best known of his tragedies. Katenine translated Corneille's tragedies into Russian. Didelot, sometime Director of the ballet at the Opera at Saint Petersburg.]

XVI

My goddesses, where are your shades?
Do ye not hear my mournful sighs?
Are ye replaced by other maids
Who cannot conjure former joys?
Shall I your chorus hear anew,
Russia's Terpsichore review
Again in her ethereal dance?
Or will my melancholy glance
On the dull stage find all things changed,
The disenchanted glass direct
Where I can no more recollect? —
A careless looker-on estranged
In silence shall I sit and yawn
And dream of life's delightful dawn?

XVII

The house is crammed. A thousand lamps
On pit, stalls, boxes, brightly blaze,
Impatiently the gallery stamps,
The curtain now they slowly raise.
Obedient to the magic strings,
Brilliant, ethereal, there springs
Forth from the crowd of nymphs surrounding
Istomina(*) the nimbly-bounding;
With one foot resting on its tip
Slow circling round its fellow swings
And now she skips and now she springs
Like down from Aeolus's lip,
Now her lithe form she arches o'er
And beats with rapid foot the floor.

[Note: Istomina — A celebrated Circassian dancer of the day, with whom the poet in his extreme youth imagined himself in love.]

XVIII

Shouts of applause! Oneguine passes
Between the stalls, along the toes;
Seated, a curious look with glasses
On unknown female forms he throws.
Free scope he yields unto his glance,
Reviews both dress and countenance,
With all dissatisfaction shows.
To male acquaintances he bows,
And finally he deigns let fall
Upon the stage his weary glance.
He yawns, averts his countenance,
Exclaiming, "We must change 'em all!
I long by ballets have been bored,
Now Didelot scarce can be endured!"

XIX

Snakes, satyrs, loves with many a shout
Across the stage still madly sweep,
Whilst the tired serving-men without
Wrapped in their sheepskins soundly sleep.
Still the loud stamping doth not cease,
Still they blow noses, cough, and sneeze,
Still everywhere, without, within,
The lamps illuminating shine;
The steed benumbed still pawing stands

And of the irksome harness tires,
And still the coachmen round the fires(11)
Abuse their masters, rub their hands:
But Eugene long hath left the press
To array himself in evening dress.

[Note 11: In Russia large fires are lighted in winter time in front of the theatres for the benefit of the menials, who, considering the state of the thermometer, cannot be said to have a jovial time of it. But in this, as in other cases, "habit" alleviates their lot, and they bear the cold with a wonderful equanimity.]

XX

Faithfully shall I now depict,
Portray the solitary den
Wherein the child of fashion strict
Dressed him, undressed, and dressed again?
All that industrial London brings
For tallow, wood and other things
Across the Baltic's salt sea waves,
All which caprice and affluence craves,
All which in Paris eager taste,
Choosing a profitable trade,
For our amusement ever made
And ease and fashionable waste, —
Adorned the apartment of Eugene,
Philosopher just turned eighteen.

XXI

China and bronze the tables weight,
Amber on pipes from Stamboul glows,
And, joy of souls effeminate,
Phials of crystal scents enclose.
Combs of all sizes, files of steel,
Scissors both straight and curved as well,
Of thirty different sorts, lo! brushes
Both for the nails and for the tushes.
Rousseau, I would remark in passing,(12)
Could not conceive how serious Grimm
Dared calmly cleanse his nails 'fore him,
Eloquent raver all-surpassing, —
The friend of liberty and laws
In this case quite mistaken was.

[Note 12: "Tout le monde sut qu'il (Grimm) mettait du blanc; et moi, qui n'en croyait rien, je commencai de le croire, non seulement par l'embellissement de son teint, et pour avoir trouve des

*tasses de blanc sur la toilette, mais sur ce qu'entrant un matin dans sa chambre, je le trouvais
brossant ses ongles avec une petite vergette faite expres, ouvrage qu'il continua fierement devant
moi. Je jugeai qu'un homme qui passe deux heures tous les matins a brosser ses ongles peut bien
passer quelques instants a remplir de blanc les creux de sa peau." Confessions de J. J. Rousseau]*

XXII

The most industrious man alive
May yet be studious of his nails;
What boots it with the age to strive?
Custom the despot soon prevails.
A new Kaverine Eugene mine,
Dreading the world's remarks malign,
Was that which we are wont to call
A fop, in dress pedantical.
Three mortal hours per diem he
Would loiter by the looking-glass,
And from his dressing-room would pass
Like Venus when, capriciously,
The goddess would a masquerade
Attend in male attire arrayed.

XXIII

On this artistical retreat
Having once fixed your interest,
I might to connoisseurs repeat
The style in which my hero dressed;
Though I confess I hardly dare
Describe in detail the affair,
Since words like pantaloons, vest, coat,
To Russ indigenous are not;
And also that my feeble verse —
Pardon I ask for such a sin —
With words of foreign origin
Too much I'm given to intersperse,
Though to the Academy I come
And oft its Dictionary thumb.(13)

*[Note 13: Refers to Dictionary of the Academy, compiled during the reign of Catherine II under the
supervision of Lomonosoff.]*

XXIV

But such is not my project now,
So let us to the ball-room haste,
Whither at headlong speed doth go

Eugene in hackney carriage placed.
Past darkened windows and long streets
Of slumbering citizens he fleets,
Till carriage lamps, a double row,
Cast a gay lustre on the snow,
Which shines with iridescent hues.
He nears a spacious mansion's gate,
By many a lamp illuminate,
And through the lofty windows views
Profiles of lovely dames he knows
And also fashionable beaux.

XXV

Our hero stops and doth alight,
Flies past the porter to the stair,
But, ere he mounts the marble flight,
With hurried hand smooths down his hair.
He enters: in the hall a crowd,
No more the music thunders loud,
Some a mazurka occupies,
Crushing and a confusing noise;
Spurs of the Cavalier Guard clash,
The feet of graceful ladies fly,
And following them ye might espy
Full many a glance like lightning flash,
And by the fiddle's rushing sound
The voice of jealousy is drowned.

XXVI

In my young days of wild delight
On balls I madly used to dote,
Fond declarations they invite
Or the delivery of a note.
So hearken, every worthy spouse,
I would your vigilance arouse,
Attentive be unto my rhymes
And due precautions take betimes.
Ye mothers also, caution use,
Upon your daughters keep an eye,
Employ your glasses constantly,
For otherwise — God only knows!
I lift a warning voice because
I long have ceased to offend the laws.

XXVII

Alas! life's hours which swiftly fly
I've wasted in amusements vain,
But were it not immoral I
Should dearly like a dance again.
I love its furious delight,
The crowd and merriment and light,
The ladies, their fantastic dress,
Also their feet — yet ne'ertheless
Scarcely in Russia can ye find
Three pairs of handsome female feet;
Ah! I still struggle to forget
A pair; though desolate my mind,
Their memory lingers still and seems
To agitate me in my dreams.

XXVIII

When, where, and in what desert land,
Madman, wilt thou from memory raze
Those feet? Alas! on what far strand
Do ye of spring the blossoms graze?
Lapped in your Eastern luxury,
No trace ye left in passing by
Upon the dreary northern snows,
But better loved the soft repose
Of splendid carpets richly wrought.
I once forgot for your sweet cause
The thirst for fame and man's applause,
My country and an exile's lot;
My joy in youth was fleeting e'en
As your light footprints on the green.

XXIX

Diana's bosom, Flora's cheeks,
Are admirable, my dear friend,
But yet Terpsichore bespeaks
Charms more enduring in the end.
For promises her feet reveal
Of untold gain she must conceal,
Their privileged allurements fire
A hidden train of wild desire.
I love them, O my dear Elvine,(14)
Beneath the table-cloth of white,
In winter on the fender bright,
In springtime on the meadows green,

Upon the ball-room's glassy floor
Or by the ocean's rocky shore.

[Note 14: Elvine, or Elvina, was not improbably the owner of the seductive feet apostrophized by the poet, since, in 1816, he wrote an ode, "To Her," which commences thus: "Elvina, my dear, come, give me thine hand," and so forth.]

XXX

Beside the stormy sea one day
I envied sore the billows tall,
Which rushed in eager dense array
Enamoured at her feet to fall.
How like the billow I desired
To kiss the feet which I admired!
No, never in the early blaze
Of fiery youth's untutored days
So ardently did I desire
A young Armida's lips to press,
Her cheek of rosy loveliness
Or bosom full of languid fire, —
A gust of passion never tore
My spirit with such pangs before.

XXXI

Another time, so willed it Fate,
Immersed in secret thought I stand
And grasp a stirrup fortunate —
Her foot was in my other hand.
Again imagination blazed,
The contact of the foot I raised
Rekindled in my withered heart
The fires of passion and its smart —
Away! and cease to ring their praise
For ever with thy tattling lyre,
The proud ones are not worth the fire
Of passion they so often raise.
The words and looks of charmers sweet
Are oft deceptive — like their feet.

XXXII

Where is Oneguine? Half asleep,
Straight from the ball to bed he goes,
Whilst Petersburg from slumber deep
The drum already doth arouse.

The shopman and the pedlar rise
And to the Bourse the cabman plies;
The Okhtenka with pitcher speeds,(15)
Crunching the morning snow she treads;
Morning awakes with joyous sound;
The shutters open; to the skies
In column blue the smoke doth rise;
The German baker looks around
His shop, a night-cap on his head,
And pauses oft to serve out bread.

[Note 15: i.e. the milkmaid from the Okhta villages, a suburb of Saint Petersburg on the right bank of the Neva chiefly inhabited by the labouring classes.]

XXXIII

But turning morning into night,
Tired by the ball's incessant noise,
The votary of vain delight
Sleep in the shadowy couch enjoys,
Late in the afternoon to rise,
When the same life before him lies
Till morn — life uniform but gay,
To-morrow just like yesterday.
But was our friend Eugene content,
Free, in the blossom of his spring,
Amidst successes flattering
And pleasure's daily blandishment,
Or vainly 'mid luxurious fare
Was he in health and void of care? —

XXXIV

Even so! His passions soon abated,
Hateful the hollow world became,
Nor long his mind was agitated
By love's inevitable flame.
For treachery had done its worst;
Friendship and friends he likewise curst,
Because he could not gourmandise
Daily beefsteaks and Strasbourg pies
And irrigate them with champagne;
Nor slander viciously could spread
Whene'er he had an aching head;
And, though a plucky scatterbrain,
He finally lost all delight
In bullets, sabres, and in fight.

XXXV

His malady, whose cause I ween
It now to investigate is time,
Was nothing but the British spleen
Transported to our Russian clime.
It gradually possessed his mind;
Though, God be praised! he ne'er designed
To slay himself with blade or ball,
Indifferent he became to all,
And like Childe Harold gloomily
He to the festival repairs,
Nor boston nor the world's affairs
Nor tender glance nor amorous sigh
Impressed him in the least degree, —
Callous to all he seemed to be.

XXXVI

Ye miracles of courtly grace,
He left *you* first, and I must own
The manners of the highest class
Have latterly vexatious grown;
And though perchance a lady may
Discourse of Bentham or of Say,
Yet as a rule their talk I call
Harmless, but quite nonsensical.
Then they're so innocent of vice,
So full of piety, correct,
So prudent, and so circumspect
Stately, devoid of prejudice,
So inaccessible to men,
Their looks alone produce the spleen.(16)

[Note 16: Apropos of this somewhat ungallant sentiment, a Russian scholiast remarks: — "The whole of this ironical stanza is but a refined eulogy of the excellent qualities of our countrywomen. Thus Boileau, in the guise of invective, eulogizes Louis XIV. Russian ladies unite in their persons great acquirements, combined with amiability and strict morality; also a species of Oriental charm which so much captivated Madame de Stael." It will occur to most that the apologist of the Russian fair "doth protest too much." The poet in all probability wrote the offending stanza in a fit of Byronic "spleen," as he would most likely himself have called it. Indeed, since Byron, poets of his school seem to assume this virtue if they have it not, and we take their utterances under its influence for what they are worth.]

XXXVII

And you, my youthful damsels fair,
Whom latterly one often meets
Urging your droshkies swift as air
Along Saint Petersburg's paved streets,
From you too Eugene took to flight,
Abandoning insane delight,
And isolated from all men,
Yawning betook him to a pen.
He thought to write, but labour long
Inspired him with disgust and so
Nought from his pen did ever flow,
And thus he never fell among
That vicious set whom I don't blame —
Because a member I became.

XXXVIII

Once more to idleness consigned,
He felt the laudable desire
From mere vacuity of mind
The wit of others to acquire.
A case of books he doth obtain —
He reads at random, reads in vain.
This nonsense, that dishonest seems,
This wicked, that absurd he deems,
All are constrained and fetters bear,
Antiquity no pleasure gave,
The moderns of the ancients rave —
Books he abandoned like the fair,
His book-shelf instantly doth drape
With taffety instead of crape.

XXXIX

Having abjured the haunts of men,
Like him renouncing vanity,
His friendship I acquired just then;
His character attracted me.
An innate love of meditation,
Original imagination,
And cool sagacious mind he had:
I was incensed and he was sad.
Both were of passion satiate
And both of dull existence tired,
Extinct the flame which once had fired;
Both were expectant of the hate

With which blind Fortune oft betrays
The very morning of our days.

XL

He who hath lived and living, thinks,
Must e'en despise his kind at last;
He who hath suffered oftentimes shrinks
From shades of the relentless past.
No fond illusions live to soothe,
But memory like a serpent's tooth
With late repentance gnaws and stings.
All this in many cases brings
A charm with it in conversation.
Oneguine's speeches I abhorred
At first, but soon became inured
To the sarcastic observation,
To witticisms and taunts half-vicious
And gloomy epigrams malicious.

XLI

How oft, when on a summer night
Transparent o'er the Neva beamed
The firmament in mellow light,
And when the watery mirror gleamed
No more with pale Diana's rays,(17)
We called to mind our youthful days —
The days of love and of romance!
Then would we muse as in a trance,
Impressionable for an hour,
And breathe the balmy breath of night;
And like the prisoner's our delight
Who for the greenwood quits his tower,
As on the rapid wings of thought
The early days of life we sought.

[Note 17: The midsummer nights in the latitude of Saint Petersburg are a prolonged twilight.]

XLII

Absorbed in melancholy mood
And o'er the granite coping bent,
Oneguine meditative stood,
E'en as the poet says he leant.(18)
'Tis silent all! Alone the cries
Of the night sentinels arise

And from the Millionaya afar(19)
The sudden rattling of a car.
Lo! on the sleeping river borne,
A boat with splashing oar floats by,
And now we hear delightedly
A jolly song and distant horn;
But sweeter in a midnight dream
Torquato Tasso's strains I deem.

[Note 18: Refers to Mouravieff's "Goddess of the Neva." At Saint Petersburg the banks of the Neva are lined throughout with splendid granite quays.]

[Note 19: A street running parallel to the Neva, and leading from the Winter Palace to the Summer Palace and Garden.]

XLIII

Ye billows of blue Hadria's sea,
O Brenta, once more we shall meet
And, inspiration firing me,
Your magic voices I shall greet,
Whose tones Apollo's sons inspire,
And after Albion's proud lyre (20)
Possess my love and sympathy.
The nights of golden Italy
I'll pass beneath the firmament,
Hid in the gondola's dark shade,
Alone with my Venetian maid,
Now talkative, now reticent;
From her my lips shall learn the tongue
Of love which whilom Petrarch sung.

[Note 20: The strong influence exercised by Byron's genius on the imagination of Pushkin is well known. Shakespeare and other English dramatists had also their share in influencing his mind, which, at all events in its earlier developments, was of an essentially imitative type. As an example of his Shakespearian tastes, see his poem of "Angelo," founded upon "Measure for Measure."]

XLIV

When will my hour of freedom come!
Time, I invoke thee! favouring gales
Awaiting on the shore I roam
And beckon to the passing sails.
Upon the highway of the sea
When shall I wing my passage free
On waves by tempests curdled o'er!
'Tis time to quit this weary shore

So uncongenial to my mind,
To dream upon the sunny strand
Of Africa, ancestral land,(21)
Of dreary Russia left behind,
Wherein I felt love's fatal dart,
Wherein I buried left my heart.

[Note 21: The poet was, on his mother's side, of African extraction, a circumstance which perhaps accounts for the southern fervour of his imagination. His great-grandfather, Abraham Petrovitch Hannibal, was seized on the coast of Africa when eight years of age by a corsair; and carried a slave to Constantinople. The Russian Ambassador bought and presented him to Peter the Great who caused him to be baptized at Vilnius. Subsequently one of Hannibal's brothers made his way to Constantinople and thence to Saint Petersburg for the purpose of ransoming him; but Peter would not surrender his godson who died at the age of ninety-two, having attained the rank of general in the Russian service.]

XLV

Eugene designed with me to start
And visit many a foreign clime,
But Fortune cast our lots apart
For a protracted space of time.
Just at that time his father died,
And soon Oneguine's door beside
Of creditors a hungry rout
Their claims and explanations shout.
But Eugene, hating litigation
And with his lot in life content,
To a surrender gave consent,
Seeing in this no deprivation,
Or counting on his uncle's death
And what the old man might bequeath.

XLVI

And in reality one day
The steward sent a note to tell
How sick to death his uncle lay
And wished to say to him farewell.
Having this mournful document
Perused, Eugene in postchaise went
And hastened to his uncle's side,
But in his heart dissatisfied,
Having for money's sake alone
Sorrow to counterfeit and wail —
Thus we began our little tale —
But, to his uncle's mansion flown,

He found him on the table laid,
A due which must to earth be paid.

XLVII

The courtyard full of serfs he sees,
And from the country all around
Had come both friends and enemies —
Funeral amateurs abound!
The body they consigned to rest,
And then made merry pope and guest,
With serious air then went away
As men who much had done that day.
Lo! my Oneguine rural lord!
Of mines and meadows, woods and lakes,
He now a full possession takes,
He who economy abhorred,
Delighted much his former ways
To vary for a few brief days.

XLVIII

For two whole days it seemed a change
To wander through the meadows still,
The cool dark oaken grove to range,
To listen to the rippling rill.
But on the third of grove and mead
He took no more the slightest heed;
They made him feel inclined to doze;
And the conviction soon arose,
Ennui can in the country dwell
Though without palaces and streets,
Cards, balls, routs, poetry or fetes;
On him spleen mounted sentinel
And like his shadow dogged his life,
Or better, — like a faithful wife.

XLIX

I was for calm existence made,
For rural solitude and dreams,
My lyre sings sweeter in the shade
And more imagination teems.
On innocent delights I dote,
Upon my lake I love to float,
For law I *far niente* take
And every morning I awake

The child of sloth and liberty.
I slumber much, a little read,
Of fleeting glory take no heed.
In former years thus did not I
In idleness and tranquil joy
The happiest days of life employ?

L

Love, flowers, the country, idleness
And fields my joys have ever been;
I like the difference to express
Between myself and my Eugene,
Lest the malicious reader or
Some one or other editor
Of keen sarcastic intellect
Herein my portrait should detect,
And impiously should declare,
To sketch myself that I have tried
Like Byron, bard of scorn and pride,
As if impossible it were
To write of any other elf
Than one's own fascinating self.

LI

Here I remark all poets are
Love to idealize inclined;
I have dreamed many a vision fair
And the recesses of my mind
Retained the image, though short-lived,
Which afterwards the muse revived.
Thus carelessly I once portrayed
Mine own ideal, the mountain maid,
The captives of the Salguir's shore.(22)
But now a question in this wise
Oft upon friendly lips doth rise:
Whom doth thy plaintive Muse adore?
To whom amongst the jealous throng
Of maids dost thou inscribe thy song?

[Note 22: Refers to two of the most interesting productions of the poet. The former line indicates the Prisoner of the Caucasus, the latter, The Fountain of Baktchiserai. The Salguir is a river of the Crimea.]

LII

Whose glance reflecting inspiration
With tenderness hath recognized
Thy meditative incantation —
Whom hath thy strain immortalized?
None, be my witness Heaven above!
The malady of hopeless love
I have endured without respite.
Happy who thereto can unite
Poetic transport. They impart
A double force unto their song
Who following Petrarch move along
And ease the tortures of the heart —
Perchance they laurels also cull —
But I, in love, was mute and dull.

LIII

The Muse appeared, when love passed by
And my dark soul to light was brought;
Free, I renewed the idolatry
Of harmony enshrining thought.
I write, and anguish flies away,
Nor doth my absent pen portray
Around my stanzas incomplete
Young ladies' faces and their feet.
Extinguished ashes do not blaze —
I mourn, but tears I cannot shed —
Soon, of the tempest which hath fled
Time will the ravages efface —
When that time comes, a poem I'll strive
To write in cantos twenty-five.

LIV

I've thought well o'er the general plan,
The hero's name too in advance,
Meantime I'll finish whilst I can
Canto the First of this romance.
I've scanned it with a jealous eye,
Discovered much absurdity,
But will not modify a tittle —
I owe the censorship a little.
For journalistic deglutition
I yield the fruit of work severe.
Go, on the Neva's bank appear,
My very latest composition!

Enjoy the meed which Fame bestows —
Misunderstanding, words and blows.

CANTO THE SECOND

The Poet

“O Rus!” — Horace

Canto The Second

[Note: Odessa, December 1823.]

I

The village wherein yawned Eugene
Was a delightful little spot,
There friends of pure delight had been
Grateful to Heaven for their lot.
The lonely mansion-house to screen
From gales a hill behind was seen;
Before it ran a stream. Behold!
Afar, where clothed in green and gold
Meadows and cornfields are displayed,
Villages in the distance show
And herds of oxen wandering low;
Whilst nearer, sunk in deeper shade,
A thick immense neglected grove
Extended — haunt which Dryads love.

II

‘Twas built, the venerable pile,
As lordly mansions ought to be,
In solid, unpretentious style,
The style of wise antiquity.
Lofty the chambers one and all,
Silk tapestry upon the wall,
Imperial portraits hang around
And stoves of various shapes abound.
All this I know is out of date,
I cannot tell the reason why,
But Eugene, incontestably,
The matter did not agitate,
Because he yawned at the bare view
Of drawing-rooms or old or new.

III

He took the room wherein the old
Man — forty years long in this wise —
His housekeeper was wont to scold,
Look through the window and kill flies.
'Twas plain — an oaken floor ye scan,
Two cupboards, table, soft divan,
And not a speck of dirt descried.
Oneguine oped the cupboards wide.
In one he doth accounts behold,
Here bottles stand in close array,
There jars of cider block the way,
An almanac but eight years old.
His uncle, busy man indeed,
No other book had time to read.

IV

Alone amid possessions great,
Eugene at first began to dream,
If but to lighten Time's dull rate,
Of many an economic scheme;
This anchorite amid his waste
The ancient *barshtchina* replaced
By an *obrok's* indulgent rate:(23)
The peasant blessed his happy fate.
But this a heinous crime appeared
Unto his neighbour, man of thrift,
Who secretly denounced the gift,
And many another slily sneered;
And all with one accord agreed,
He was a dangerous fool indeed.

[Note 23: The *barshtchina* was the *corvee*, or forced labour of three days per week rendered previous to the emancipation of 1861 by the serfs to their lord. The *obrok* was a species of poll-tax paid by a serf, either in lieu of the forced labour or in consideration of being permitted to exercise a trade or profession elsewhere. Very heavy obroks have at times been levied on serfs possessed of skill or accomplishments, or who had amassed wealth; and circumstances may be easily imagined which, under such a system, might lead to great abuses.]

V

All visited him at first, of course;
But since to the backdoor they led
Most usually a Cossack horse
Upon the Don's broad pastures bred
If they but heard domestic loads

Come rumbling up the neighbouring roads,
Most by this circumstance offended
All overtures of friendship ended.
“Oh! what a fool our neighbour is!
He’s a freemason, so we think.
Alone he doth his claret drink,
A lady’s hand doth never kiss.
‘Tis *yes! no! never madam! sir!*”(24)
This was his social character.

[Note 24: The neighbours complained of Oneguine’s want of courtesy. He always replied “da” or “nyet,” yes or no, instead of “das” or “nyets” — the final s being a contraction of “sudar” or “sudarinia,” i.e. sir or madam.]

VI

Into the district then to boot
A new proprietor arrived,
From whose analysis minute
The neighbourhood fresh sport derived.
Vladimir Lenski was his name,
From Gottingen inspired he came,
A worshipper of Kant, a bard,
A young and handsome galliard.
He brought from mystic Germany
The fruits of learning and combined
A fiery and eccentric mind,
Idolatry of liberty,
A wild enthusiastic tongue,
Black curls which to his shoulders hung.

VII

The pervert world with icy chill
Had not yet withered his young breast.
His heart reciprocated still
When Friendship smiled or Love caressed.
He was a dear delightful fool —
A nursling yet for Hope to school.
The riot of the world and glare
Still sovereigns of his spirit were,
And by a sweet delusion he
Would soothe the doubtings of his soul,
He deemed of human life the goal
To be a charming mystery:
He racked his brains to find its clue
And marvels deemed he thus should view.

VIII

This he believed: a kindred spirit
Impelled to union with his own
Lay languishing both day and night —
Waiting his coming — his alone!
He deemed his friends but longed to make
Great sacrifices for his sake!
That a friend's arm in every case
Felled a calumniator base!
That chosen heroes consecrate,
Friends of the sons of every land,
Exist — that their immortal band
Shall surely, be it soon or late,
Pour on this orb a dazzling light
And bless mankind with full delight.

IX

Compassion now or wrath inspires
And now philanthropy his soul,
And now his youthful heart desires
The path which leads to glory's goal.
His harp beneath that sky had rung
Where sometime Goethe, Schiller sung,
And at the altar of their fame
He kindled his poetic flame.
But from the Muses' loftiest height
The gifted songster never swerved,
But proudly in his song preserved
An ever transcendental flight;
His transports were quite maidenly,
Charming with grave simplicity.

X

He sang of love — to love a slave.
His ditties were as pure and bright
As thoughts which gentle maidens have,
As a babe's slumber, or the light
Of the moon in the tranquil skies,
Goddess of lovers' tender sighs.
He sang of separation grim,
Of what not, and of distant dim,
Of roses to romancers dear;
To foreign lands he would allude,

Where long time he in solitude
Had let fall many a bitter tear:
He sang of life's fresh colours stained
Before he eighteen years attained.

XI

Since Eugene in that solitude
Gifts such as these alone could prize,
A scant attendance Lenski showed
At neighbouring hospitalities.
He shunned those parties boisterous;
The conversation tedious
About the crop of hay, the wine,
The kennel or a kindred line,
Was certainly not erudite
Nor sparkled with poetic fire,
Nor wit, nor did the same inspire
A sense of social delight,
But still more stupid did appear
The gossip of their ladies fair.

XII

Handsome and rich, the neighbourhood
Lenski as a good match received, —
Such is the country custom good;
All mothers their sweet girls believed
Suitable for this semi-Russian.
He enters: rapidly discussion
Shifts, tacks about, until they prate
The sorrows of a single state.
Perchance where Dunia pours out tea
The young proprietor we find;
To Dunia then they whisper: Mind!
And a guitar produced we see,
And Heavens! warbled forth we hear:
Come to my golden palace, dear!(25)

[Note 25: From the lay of the Russalka, i.e. mermaid of the Dnieper.]

XIII

But Lenski, having no desire
Vows matrimonial to break,
With our Oneguine doth aspire
Acquaintance instantly to make.

They met. Earth, water, prose and verse,
Or ice and flame, are not diverse
If they were similar in aught.
At first such contradictions wrought
Mutual repulsion and ennui,
But grown familiar side by side
On horseback every day they ride —
Inseparable soon they be.
Thus oft — this I myself confess —
Men become friends from idleness.

XIV

But even thus not now-a-days!
In spite of common sense we're wont
As cyphers others to appraise,
Ourselves as unities to count;
And like Napoleons each of us
A million bipeds reckons thus
One instrument for his own use —
Feeling is silly, dangerous.
Eugene, more tolerant than this
(Though certainly mankind he knew
And usually despised it too),
Exceptionless as no rule is,
A few of different temper deemed,
Feeling in others much esteemed.

XV

With smiling face he Lenski hears;
The poet's fervid conversation
And judgment which unsteady veers
And eye which gleams with inspiration —
All this was novel to Eugene.
The cold reply with gloomy mien
He oft upon his lips would curb,
Thinking: 'tis foolish to disturb
This evanescent boyish bliss.
Time without me will lessons give,
So meantime let him joyous live
And deem the world perfection is!
Forgive the fever youth inspires,
And youthful madness, youthful fires.

XVI

The gulf between them was so vast,
Debate commanded ample food —
The laws of generations past,
The fruits of science, evil, good,
The prejudices all men have,
The fatal secrets of the grave,
And life and fate in turn selected
Were to analysis subjected.
The fervid poet would recite,
Carried away by ecstasy,
Fragments of northern poetry,
Whilst Eugene condescending quite,
Though scarcely following what was said,
Attentive listened to the lad.

XVII

But more the passions occupy
The converse of our hermits twain,
And, heaving a regretful sigh,
An exile from their troublous reign,
Eugene would speak regarding these.
Thrice happy who their agonies
Hath suffered but indifferent grown,
Still happier he who ne'er hath known!
By absence who hath chilled his love,
His hate by slander, and who spends
Existence without wife or friends,
Whom jealous transport cannot move,
And who the rent-roll of his race
Ne'er trusted to the treacherous ace.

XVIII

When, wise at length, we seek repose
Beneath the flag of Quietude,
When Passion's fire no longer glows
And when her violence reviewed —
Each gust of temper, silly word,
Seems so unnatural and absurd:
Reduced with effort unto sense,
We hear with interest intense
The accents wild of other's woes,
They stir the heart as heretofore.
So ancient warriors, battles o'er,
A curious interest disclose

In yarns of youthful troopers gay,
Lost in the hamlet far away.

XIX

And in addition youth is flame
And cannot anything conceal,
Is ever ready to proclaim
The love, hate, sorrow, joy, we feel.
Deeming himself a veteran scarred
In love's campaigns Oneguine heard
With quite a lachrymose expression
The youthful poet's fond confession.
He with an innocence extreme
His inner consciousness laid bare,
And Eugene soon discovered there
The story of his young love's dream,
Where plentifully feelings flow
Which we experienced long ago.

XX

Alas! he loved as in our times
Men love no more, as only the
Mad spirit of the man who rhymes
Is still condemned in love to be;
One image occupied his mind,
Constant affection intertwined
And an habitual sense of pain;
And distance interposed in vain,
Nor years of separation all
Nor homage which the Muse demands
Nor beauties of far distant lands
Nor study, banquet, rout nor ball
His constant soul could ever tire,
Which glowed with virginal desire.

XXI

When but a boy he Olga loved
Unknown as yet the aching heart,
He witnessed tenderly and moved
Her girlish gaiety and sport.
Beneath the sheltering oak tree's shade
He with his little maiden played,
Whilst the fond parents, friends thro' life,
Dreamed in the future man and wife.

And full of innocent delight,
As in a thicket's humble shade,
Beneath her parents' eyes the maid
Grew like a lily pure and white,
Unseen in thick and tangled grass
By bee and butterfly which pass.

XXII

'Twas she who first within his breast
Poetic transport did infuse,
And thoughts of Olga first impressed
A mournful temper on his Muse.
Farewell! thou golden days of love!
'Twas then he loved the tangled grove
And solitude and calm delight,
The moon, the stars, and shining night —
The moon, the lamp of heaven above,
To whom we used to consecrate
A promenade in twilight late
With tears which secret sufferers love —
But now in her effulgence pale
A substitute for lamps we hail!

XXIII

Obedient she had ever been
And modest, cheerful as the morn,
As a poetic life serene,
Sweet as the kiss of lovers sworn.
Her eyes were of cerulean blue,
Her locks were of a golden hue,
Her movements, voice and figure slight,
All about Olga — to a light
Romance of love I pray refer,
You'll find her portrait there, I vouch;
I formerly admired her much
But finally grew bored by her.
But with her elder sister I
Must now my stanzas occupy.

XXIV

Tattiana was her appellation.
We are the first who such a name
In pages of a love narration
With such a perversity proclaim.

But wherefore not? — 'Tis pleasant, nice,
Euphonious, though I know a spice
It carries of antiquity
And of the attic. Honestly,
We must admit but little taste
Doth in us or our names appear(26)
(I speak not of our poems here),
And education runs to waste,
Endowing us from out her store
With affectation, — nothing more.

[Note 26: The Russian annotator remarks: "The most euphonious Greek names, e.g. Agathon, Philotas, Theodora, Thekla, etc., are used amongst us by the lower classes only."]

XXV

And so Tattiana was her name,
Nor by her sister's brilliancy
Nor by her beauty she became
The cynosure of every eye.
Shy, silent did the maid appear
As in the timid forest deer,
Even beneath her parents' roof
Stood as estranged from all aloof,
Nearest and dearest knew not how
To fawn upon and love express;
A child devoid of childishness
To romp and play she ne'er would go:
Oft staring through the window pane
Would she in silence long remain.

XXVI

Contemplativeness, her delight,
E'en from her cradle's earliest dream,
Adorned with many a vision bright
Of rural life the sluggish stream;
Ne'er touched her fingers indolent
The needle nor, o'er framework bent,
Would she the canvas tight enrich
With gay design and silken stitch.
Desire to rule ye may observe
When the obedient doll in sport
An infant maiden doth exhort
Polite demeanour to preserve,
Gravely repeating to another
Recent instructions of its mother.

XXVII

But Tania ne'er displayed a passion
For dolls, e'en from her earliest years,
And gossip of the town and fashion
She ne'er repeated unto hers.
Strange unto her each childish game,
But when the winter season came
And dark and drear the evenings were,
Terrible tales she loved to hear.
And when for Olga nurse arrayed
In the broad meadow a gay rout,
All the young people round about,
At prisoner's base she never played.
Their noisy laugh her soul annoyed,
Their giddy sports she ne'er enjoyed.

XXVIII

She loved upon the balcony
To anticipate the break of day,
When on the pallid eastern sky
The starry beacons fade away,
The horizon luminous doth grow,
Morning's forerunners, breezes blow
And gradually day unfolds.
In winter, when Night longer holds
A hemisphere beneath her sway,
Longer the East inert reclines
Beneath the moon which dimly shines,
And calmly sleeps the hours away,
At the same hour she oped her eyes
And would by candlelight arise.

XXIX

Romances pleased her from the first,
Her all in all did constitute;
In love adventures she was versed,
Rousseau and Richardson to boot.
Not a bad fellow was her father
Though superannuated rather;
In books he saw nought to condemn
But, as he never opened them,
Viewed them with not a little scorn,
And gave himself but little pain

His daughter's book to ascertain
Which 'neath her pillow lay till morn.
His wife was also mad upon
The works of Mr. Richardson.

XXX

She was thus fond of Richardson
Not that she had his works perused,
Or that adoring Grandison
That rascal Lovelace she abused;
But that Princess Pauline of old,
Her Moscow cousin, often told
The tale of these romantic men;
Her husband was a bridegroom then,
And she despite herself would waste
Sighs on another than her lord
Whose qualities appeared to afford
More satisfaction to her taste.
Her Grandison was in the Guard,
A noted fop who gambled hard.

XXXI

Like his, her dress was always nice,
The height of fashion, fitting tight,
But contrary to her advice
The girl in marriage they unite.
Then, her distraction to allay,
The bridegroom sage without delay
Removed her to his country seat,
Where God alone knows whom she met.
She struggled hard at first thus pent,
Night separated from her spouse,
Then became busy with the house,
First reconciled and then content;
Habit was given us in distress
By Heaven in lieu of happiness.

XXXII

Habit alleviates the grief
Inseparable from our lot;
This great discovery relief
And consolation soon begot.
And then she soon 'twixt work and leisure
Found out the secret how at pleasure

To dominate her worthy lord,
And harmony was soon restored.
The workpeople she superintended,
Mushrooms for winter salted down,
Kept the accounts, shaved many a crown, (*)
The bath on Saturdays attended,
When angry beat her maids, I grieve,
And all without her husband's leave.

[Note: The serfs destined for military service used to have a portion of their heads shaved as a distinctive mark.]

XXXIII

In her friends' albums, time had been,
With blood instead of ink she scrawled,
Baptized Prascovia Pauline,
And in her conversation drawled.
She wore her corset tightly bound,
The Russian N with nasal sound
She would pronounce *a la Francaise*;
But soon she altered all her ways,
Corset and album and Pauline,
Her sentimental verses all,
She soon forgot, began to call
Akulka who was once Celine,
And had with waddling in the end
Her caps and night-dresses to mend.

XXXIV

As for her spouse he loved her dearly,
In her affairs ne'er interfered,
Entrusted all to her sincerely,
In dressing-gown at meals appeared.
Existence calmly sped along,
And oft at eventide a throng
Of friends unceremonious would
Assemble from the neighbourhood:
They growl a bit — they scandalise —
They crack a feeble joke and smile —
Thus the time passes and meanwhile
Olga the tea must supervise —
'Tis time for supper, now for bed,
And soon the friendly troop hath fled.

XXXV

They in a peaceful life preserved
Customs by ages sanctified,
Strictly the Carnival observed,
Ate Russian pancakes at Shrovetide,
Twice in the year to fast were bound,
Of whirligigs were very fond,
Of Christmas carols, song and dance;
When people with long countenance
On Trinity Sunday yawned at prayer,
Three tears they dropt with humble mein
Upon a bunch of lovage green;
Kvass needful was to them as air;
On guests their servants used to wait
By rank as settled by the State.(27)

*[Note 27: The foregoing stanza requires explanation. Russian pancakes or "blinni" are consumed vigorously by the lower orders during the Carnival. At other times it is difficult to procure them, at any rate in the large towns. The Russian peasants are childishly fond of whirligigs, which are also much in vogue during the Carnival. "Christmas Carols" is not an exact equivalent for the Russian phrase. "Podbliudni pessni," are literally "dish songs," or songs used with dishes (of water) during the "sviatki" or Holy Nights, which extend from Christmas to Twelfth Night, for purposes of divination. Reference will again be made to this superstitious practice, which is not confined to Russia. See Note 52. "Song and dance," the well-known "khorovod," in which the dance proceeds to vocal music. "Lovage," the *Levisticum officinalis*, is a hardy plant growing very far north, though an inhabitant of our own kitchen gardens. The passage containing the reference to the three tears and Trinity Sunday was at first deemed irreligious by the Russian censors, and consequently expunged. Kvass is of various sorts: there is the common kvass of fermented rye used by the peasantry, and the more expensive kvass of the restaurants, iced and flavoured with various fruits. The final two lines refer to the "Tchin," or Russian social hierarchy. There are fourteen grades in the Tchin assigning relative rank and precedence to the members of the various departments of the State, civil, military, naval, court, scientific and educational. The military and naval grades from the 14th up to the 7th confer personal nobility only, whilst above the 7th hereditary rank is acquired. In the remaining departments, civil or otherwise, personal nobility is only attained with the 9th grade, hereditary with the 4th.]*

XXXVI

Thus age approached, the common doom,
And death before the husband wide
Opened the portals of the tomb
And a new diadem supplied.(28)
Just before dinner-time he slept,
By neighbouring families bewept,
By children and by faithful wife
With deeper woe than others' grief.
He was an honest gentleman,

And where at last his bones repose
The epitaph on marble shows:
*Demetrius Larine, sinful man,
Servant of God and brigadier,
Enjoyeth peaceful slumber here.*

[Note 28: A play upon the word "venetz," crown, which also signifies a nimbus or glory, and is the symbol of marriage from the fact of two gilt crowns being held over the heads of the bride and bridegroom during the ceremony. The literal meaning of the passage is therefore: his earthly marriage was dissolved and a heavenly one was contracted.]

XXXVII

To his Penates now returned,
Vladimir Lenski visited
His neighbour's lowly tomb and mourned
Above the ashes of the dead.
There long time sad at heart he stayed:
"Poor Yorick," mournfully he said,
"How often in thine arms I lay;
How with thy medal I would play,
The Medal Otchakoff conferred!(29)
To me he would his Olga give,
Would whisper: shall I so long live?" —
And by a genuine sorrow stirred,
Lenski his pencil-case took out
And an elegiac poem wrote.

[Note 29: The fortress of Otchakoff was taken by storm on the 18th December 1788 by a Russian army under Prince Potemkin. Thirty thousand Turks are said to have perished during the assault and ensuing massacre.]

XXXVIII

Likewise an epitaph with tears
He writes upon his parents' tomb,
And thus ancestral dust reveres.
Oh! on the fields of life how bloom
Harvests of souls unceasingly
By Providence's dark decree!
They blossom, ripen and they fall
And others rise ephemeral!
Thus our light race grows up and lives,
A moment effervescing stirs,
Then seeks ancestral sepulchres,
The appointed hour arrives, arrives!
And our successors soon shall drive

Us from the world wherein we live.

XXXIX

Meantime, drink deeply of the flow
Of frivolous existence, friends;
Its insignificance I know
And care but little for its ends.
To dreams I long have closed mine eyes,
Yet sometimes banished hopes will rise
And agitate my heart again;
And thus it is 'twould cause me pain
Without the faintest trace to leave
This world. I do not praise desire,
Yet still apparently aspire
My mournful fate in verse to weave,
That like a friendly voice its tone
Rescue me from oblivion.

XL

Perchance some heart 'twill agitate,
And then the stanzas of my theme
Will not, preserved by kindly Fate,
Perish absorbed by Lethe's stream.
Then it may be, O flattering tale,
Some future ignoramus shall
My famous portrait indicate
And cry: he was a poet great!
My gratitude do not disdain,
Admirer of the peaceful Muse,
Whose memory doth not refuse
My light productions to retain,
Whose hands indulgently caress
The bays of age and helplessness.

CANTO THE THIRD

The Country Damsel

‘Elle etait fille, elle etait amoureuse’ — Malfilatre

Canto The Third

[Note: Odessa and Mikhailovskoe, 1824.]

I

“Whither away? Deuce take the bard!” —
“Good-bye, Oneguine, I must go.” —
“I won’t detain you; but ‘tis hard
To guess how you the eve pull through.” —
“At Larina’s.” — ”Hem, that is queer!
Pray is it not a tough affair
Thus to assassinate the eve?” —
“Not at all.” — ”That I can’t conceive!
‘Tis something of this sort I deem.
In the first place, say, am I right?
A Russian household simple quite,
Who welcome guests with zeal extreme,
Preserves and an eternal prattle
About the rain and flax and cattle.” —

II

“No misery I see in that” —
“Boredom, my friend, behold the ill — ”
“Your fashionable world I hate,
Domestic life attracts me still,
Where — ” — ”What! another eclogue spin?
For God’s sake, Lenski, don’t begin!
What! really going? ‘Tis too bad!
But Lenski, I should be so glad
Would you to me this Phyllis show,
Fair source of every fine idea,
Verses and tears et cetera.
Present me.” — ”You are joking.” — ”No.” —
“Delighted.” — ”When?” — ”This very night.
They will receive us with delight.”

III

Whilst homeward by the nearest route
 Our heroes at full gallop sped,
 Can we not stealthily make out
 What they in conversation said? —
 “How now, Oneguine, yawning still?” —
 “‘Tis habit, Lenski.” — ”Is your ill
 More troublesome than usual?” — ”No!
 How dark the night is getting though!
 Hallo, Andriushka, onward race!
 The drive becomes monotonous —
 Well! Larina appears to us
 An ancient lady full of grace. —
 That bilberry wine, I’m sore afraid,
 The deuce with my inside has played.”

IV

“Say, of the two which was Tattiana?”
 “She who with melancholy face
 And silent as the maid Svetlana(30)
 Hard by the window took her place.” —
 “The younger, you’re in love with her!”
 “Well!” — ”I the elder should prefer,
 Were I like you a bard by trade —
 In Olga’s face no life’s displayed.
 ‘Tis a Madonna of Vandyk,
 An oval countenance and pink,
 Yon silly moon upon the brink
 Of the horizon she is like!” —
 Vladimir something curtly said
 Nor further comment that night made.

[Note 30: “Svetlana,” a short poem by Joukovski, upon which his fame mainly rests. Joukovski was an unblushing plagiarist. Many eminent English poets have been laid under contribution by him, often without going through the form of acknowledging the source of inspiration. Even the poem in question cannot be pronounced entirely original, though its intrinsic beauty is unquestionable. It undoubtedly owes its origin to Burger’s poem “Leonora,” which has found so many English translators. Not content with a single development of Burger’s ghastly production the Russian poet has directly paraphrased “Leonora” under its own title, and also written a poem “Liudmila” in imitation of it. The principal outlines of these three poems are as follows: A maiden loses her lover in the wars; she murmurs at Providence and is vainly reprov’d for such blasphemy by her mother. Providence at length loses patience and sends her lover’s spirit, to all appearances as if in the flesh, who induces the unfortunate maiden to elope. Instead of riding to a church or bridal chamber the unpleasant bridegroom resorts to the graveyard and repairs to his own grave, from which he has recently issued to execute his errand. It is a repulsive subject. “Svetlana,” however, is more agreeable than its prototype “Leonora,” inasmuch as the whole catastrophe turns out a dream

brought on by “sorcery,” during the “sviatki” or Holy Nights (see Canto V. st. x), and the dreamer awakes to hear the tinkling of her lover’s sledge approaching. “Svetlana” has been translated by Sir John Bowring.]

V

Meantime Oneguine’s apparition
At Larina’s abode produced
Quite a sensation; the position
To all good neighbours’ sport conduced.
Endless conjectures all propound
And secretly their views expound.
What jokes and guesses now abound,
A beau is for Tattiana found!
In fact, some people were assured
The wedding-day had been arranged,
But the date subsequently changed
Till proper rings could be procured.
On Lenski’s matrimonial fate
They long ago had held debate.

VI

Of course Tattiana was annoyed
By such allusions scandalous,
Yet was her inmost soul o’erjoyed
With satisfaction marvellous,
As in her heart the thought sank home,
I am in love, my hour hath come!
Thus in the earth the seed expands
Obedient to warm Spring’s commands.
Long time her young imagination
By indolence and languor fired
The fated nutriment desired;
And long internal agitation
Had filled her youthful breast with gloom,
She waited for — I don’t know whom!

VII

The fatal hour had come at last —
She oped her eyes and cried: ‘tis he!
Alas! for now before her passed
The same warm vision constantly;
Now all things round about repeat
Ceaselessly to the maiden sweet
His name: the tenderness of home

Tiresome unto her hath become
And the kind-hearted servitors:
Immersed in melancholy thought,
She hears of conversation nought
And hated casual visitors,
Their coming which no man expects,
And stay whose length none recollects.

VIII

Now with what eager interest
She the delicious novel reads,
With what avidity and zest
She drinks in those seductive deeds!
All the creations which below
From happy inspiration flow,
The swain of Julia Wolmar,
Malek Adel and De Linar,(31)
Werther, rebellious martyr bold,
And that unrivalled paragon,
The sleep-compelling Grandison,
Our tender dreamer had enrolled
A single being: 'twas in fine
No other than Oneguine mine.

[Note 31: The heroes of two romances much in vogue in Pushkin's time: the former by Madame Cottin, the latter by the famous Madame Krudener. The frequent mention in the course of this poem of romances once enjoying a European celebrity but now consigned to oblivion, will impress the reader with the transitory nature of merely mediocre literary reputation. One has now to search for the very names of most of the popular authors of Pushkin's day and rummage biographical dictionaries for the dates of their births and deaths. Yet the poet's prime was but fifty years ago, and had he lived to a ripe old age he would have been amongst us still. He was four years younger than the late Mr. Thomas Carlyle. The decadence of Richardson's popularity amongst his countrymen is a fact familiar to all.]

IX

Dreaming herself the heroine
Of the romances she preferred,
Clarissa, Julia, Delphine, — (32)
Tattiana through the forest erred,
And the bad book accompanies.
Upon those pages she describes
Her passion's faithful counterpart,
Fruit of the yearnings of the heart.
She heaves a sigh and deep intent
On raptures, sorrows not her own,

She murmurs in an undertone
A letter for her hero meant:
That hero, though his merit shone,
Was certainly no Grandison.

[Note 32: Referring to Richardson's "Clarissa Harlowe," "La Nouvelle Heloise," and Madame de Stael's "Delphine."]

X

Alas! my friends, the years flit by
And after them at headlong pace
The evanescent fashions fly
In motley and amusing chase.
The world is ever altering!
Farthingales, patches, were the thing,
And courtier, fop, and usurer
Would once in powdered wig appear;
Time was, the poet's tender quill
In hopes of everlasting fame
A finished madrigal would frame
Or couplets more ingenious still;
Time was, a valiant general might
Serve who could neither read nor write.

XI

Time was, in style magniloquent
Authors replete with sacred fire
Their heroes used to represent
All that perfection could desire;
Ever by adverse fate oppressed,
Their idols they were wont to invest
With intellect, a taste refined,
And handsome countenance combined,
A heart wherein pure passion burnt;
The excited hero in a trice
Was ready for self-sacrifice,
And in the final tome we learnt,
Vice had due punishment awarded,
Virtue was with a bride rewarded.

XII

But now our minds are mystified
And Virtue acts as a narcotic,
Vice in romance is glorified

And triumphs in career erotic.
The monsters of the British Muse
Deprive our schoolgirls of repose,
The idols of their adoration
A Vampire fond of meditation,
Or Melmoth, gloomy wanderer he,
The Eternal Jew or the Corsair
Or the mysterious Sbogar.(33)
Byron's capricious phantasy
Could in romantic mantle drape
E'en hopeless egoism's dark shape.

[Note 33: "Melmoth," a romance by Maturin, and "Jean Sbogar," by Ch. Nodier. "The Vampire," a tale published in 1819, was erroneously attributed to Lord Byron. "Salathiel; the Eternal Jew," a romance by Geo. Croly.]

XIII

My friends, what means this odd digression?
May be that I by heaven's decrees
Shall abdicate the bard's profession,
And shall adopt some new caprice.
Thus having braved Apollo's rage
With humble prose I'll fill my page
And a romance in ancient style
Shall my declining years beguile;
Nor shall my pen paint terribly
The torment born of crime unseen,
But shall depict the touching scene
Of Russian domesticity;
I will descant on love's sweet dream,
The olden time shall be my theme.

XIV

Old people's simple conversations
My unpretending page shall fill,
Their offspring's innocent flirtations
By the old lime-tree or the rill,
Their Jealousy and separation
And tears of reconciliation:
Fresh cause of quarrel then I'll find,
But finally in wedlock bind.
The passionate speeches I'll repeat,
Accents of rapture or despair
I uttered to my lady fair
Long ago, prostrate at her feet.

Then they came easily enow,
My tongue is somewhat rusty now.

XV

Tattiana! sweet Tattiana, see!
What bitter tears with thee I shed!
Thou hast resigned thy destiny
Unto a ruthless tyrant dread.
Thou'lt suffer, dearest, but before,
Hope with her fascinating power
To dire contentment shall give birth
And thou shalt taste the joys of earth.
Thou'lt quaff love's sweet envenomed stream,
Fantastic images shall swarm
In thy imagination warm,
Of happy meetings thou shalt dream,
And wheresoe'er thy footsteps err,
Confront thy fated torturer!

XVI

Love's pangs Tattiana agonize.
She seeks the garden in her need —
Sudden she stops, casts down her eyes
And cares not farther to proceed;
Her bosom heaves whilst crimson hues
With sudden flush her cheeks suffuse,
Barely to draw her breath she seems,
Her eye with fire unwonted gleams.
And now 'tis night, the guardian moon
Sails her allotted course on high,
And from the misty woodland nigh
The nightingale trills forth her tune;
Restless Tattiana sleepless lay
And thus unto her nurse did say:

XVII

"Nurse, 'tis so close I cannot rest.
Open the window — sit by me."
"What ails thee, dear?" — "I feel depressed.
Relate some ancient history."
"But which, my dear? — In days of yore
Within my memory I bore
Many an ancient legend which
In monsters and fair dames was rich;

But now my mind is desolate,
What once I knew is clean forgot —
Alas! how wretched now my lot!”
“But tell me, nurse, can you relate
The days which to your youth belong?
Were you in love when you were young?” —

XVIII

“Alack! Tattiana,” she replied,
“We never loved in days of old,
My mother-in-law who lately died(34)
Had killed me had the like been told.”
“How came you then to wed a man?” —
“Why, as God ordered! My Ivan
Was younger than myself, my light,
For I myself was thirteen quite;(35)
The matchmaker a fortnight sped,
Her suit before my parents pressing:
At last my father gave his blessing,
And bitter tears of fright I shed.
Weeping they loosed my tresses long(36)
And led me off to church with song.”

[Note 34: A young married couple amongst Russian peasants reside in the house of the bridegroom's father till the “tiaglo,” or family circle is broken up by his death.]

[Note 35: Marriages amongst Russian serfs used formerly to take place at ridiculously early ages. Haxthausen asserts that strong hearty peasant women were to be seen at work in the fields with their infant husbands in their arms. The inducement lay in the fact that the “tiaglo” (see previous note) received an additional lot of the communal land for every male added to its number; though this could have formed an inducement in the southern and fertile provinces of Russia only, as it is believed that agriculture in the north is so unremunerative that land has often to be forced upon the peasants, in order that the taxes, for which the whole Commune is responsible to Government, may be paid. The abuse of early marriages was regulated by Tsar Nicholas.]

[Note 36: Courtships were not unfrequently carried on in the larger villages, which alone could support such an individual, by means of a “svakha,” or matchmaker. In Russia unmarried girls wear their hair in a single long plait or tail, “kossa;” the married women, on the other hand, in two, which are twisted into the head-gear.]

XIX

“Then amongst strangers I was left —
But I perceive thou dost not heed — ”
“Alas! dear nurse, my heart is cleft,
Mortally sick I am indeed.

Behold, my sobs I scarce restrain — ”
“My darling child, thou art in pain. —
The Lord deliver her and save!
Tell me at once what wilt thou have?
I’ll sprinkle thee with holy water. —
How thy hands burn!” — ”Dear nurse, I’m well.
I am — in love — you know — don’t tell!”
“The Lord be with thee, O my daughter!” —
And the old nurse a brief prayer said
And crossed with trembling hand the maid.

XX

“I am in love,” her whispers tell
The aged woman in her woe:
“My heart’s delight, thou art not well.” —
“I am in love, nurse! leave me now.”
Behold! the moon was shining bright
And showed with an uncertain light
Tattiana’s beauty, pale with care,
Her tears and her dishevelled hair;
And on the footstool sitting down
Beside our youthful heroine fair,
A kerchief round her silver hair
The aged nurse in ample gown,(37)
Whilst all creation seemed to dream
Enchanted by the moon’s pale beam.

[Note 37: It is thus that I am compelled to render a female garment not known, so far as I am aware, to Western Europe. It is called by the natives “doushegreika,” that is to say, “warmer of the soul” — in French, chaufferette de l’ame. It is a species of thick pelisse worn over the “sarafan,” or gown.]

XXI

But borne in spirit far away
Tattiana gazes on the moon,
And starting suddenly doth say:
“Nurse, leave me. I would be alone.
Pen, paper bring: the table too
Draw near. I soon to sleep shall go —
Good-night.” Behold! she is alone!
‘Tis silent — on her shines the moon —
Upon her elbow she reclines,
And Eugene ever in her soul
Indites an inconsiderate scroll
Wherein love innocently pines.
Now it is ready to be sent —

For whom, Tattiana, is it meant?

XXII

I have known beauties cold and raw
As Winter in their purity,
Striking the intellect with awe
By dull insensibility,
And I admired their common sense
And natural benevolence,
But, I acknowledge, from them fled;
For on their brows I trembling read
The inscription o'er the gates of Hell
"Abandon hope for ever here!"(38)
Love to inspire doth woe appear
To such — delightful to repel.
Perchance upon the Neva e'en
Similar dames ye may have seen.

[Note 38: A Russian annotator complains that the poet has mutilated Dante's famous line.]

XXIII

Amid submissive herds of men
Virgins miraculous I see,
Who selfishly unmoved remain
Alike by sighs and flattery.
But what astonished do I find
When harsh demeanour hath consigned
A timid love to banishment? —
On fresh allurements they are bent,
At least by show of sympathy;
At least their accents and their words
Appear attuned to softer chords;
And then with blind credulity
The youthful lover once again
Pursues phantasmagoria vain.

XXIV

Why is Tattiana guiltier deemed? —
Because in singleness of thought
She never of deception dreamed
But trusted the ideal she wrought? —
Because her passion wanted art,
Obeyed the impulses of heart? —
Because she was so innocent,

That Heaven her character had blent
With an imagination wild,
With intellect and strong volition
And a determined disposition,
An ardent heart and yet so mild? —
Doth love's incautiousness in her
So irremissible appear?

XXV

O ye whom tender love hath pained
Without the ken of parents both,
Whose hearts responsive have remained
To the impressions of our youth,
The all-entrancing joys of love —
Young ladies, if ye ever strove
The mystic lines to tear away
A lover's letter might convey,
Or into bold hands anxiously
Have e'er a precious tress consigned,
Or even, silent and resigned,
When separation's hour drew nigh,
Have felt love's agitated kiss
With tears, confused emotions, bliss, —

XXVI

With unanimity complete,
Condemn not weak Tattiana mine;
Do not cold-bloodedly repeat
The sneers of critics superfine;
And you, O maids immaculate,
Whom vice, if named, doth agitate
E'en as the presence of a snake,
I the same admonition make.
Who knows? with love's consuming flame
Perchance you also soon may burn,
Then to some gallant in your turn
Will be ascribed by treacherous Fame
The triumph of a conquest new.
The God of Love is after you!

XXVII

A coquette loves by calculation,
Tattiana's love was quite sincere,
A love which knew no limitation,

Even as the love of children dear.
She did not think “procrastination
Enhances love in estimation
And thus secures the prey we seek.
His vanity first let us pique
With hope and then perplexity,
Excruciate the heart and late
With jealous fire resuscitate,
Lest jaded with satiety,
The artful prisoner should seek
Incessantly his chains to break.”

XXVIII

I still a complication view,
My country’s honour and repute
Demands that I translate for you
The letter which Tattiana wrote.
At Russ she was by no means clever
And read our newspapers scarce ever,
And in her native language she
Possessed nor ease nor fluency,
So she in French herself expressed.
I cannot help it I declare,
Though hitherto a lady ne’er
In Russ her love made manifest,
And never hath our language proud
In correspondence been allowed.(39)

[Note 39: It is well known that until the reign of the late Tsar French was the language of the Russian court and of Russian fashionable society. It should be borne in mind that at the time this poem was written literary warfare more or less open was being waged between two hostile schools of Russian men of letters. These consisted of the Arzamass, or French school, to which Pushkin himself together with his uncle Vassili Pushkin the “Nestor of the Arzamass” belonged, and their opponents who devoted themselves to the cultivation of the vernacular.]

XXIX

They wish that ladies should, I hear,
Learn Russian, but the Lord defend!
I can’t conceive a little dear
With the “Well-Wisher” in her hand!(40)
I ask, all ye who poets are,
Is it not true? the objects fair,
To whom ye for unnumbered crimes
Had to compose in secret rhymes,
To whom your hearts were consecrate, —

Did they not all the Russian tongue
With little knowledge and that wrong
In charming fashion mutilate?
Did not their lips with foreign speech
The native Russian tongue impeach?

[Note 40: The "Blago-Namierenni," or "Well-Wisher," was an inferior Russian newspaper of the day, much scoffed at by contemporaries. The editor once excused himself for some gross error by pleading that he had been "on the loose."]

XXX

God grant I meet not at a ball
Or at a promenade mayhap,
A schoolmaster in yellow shawl
Or a professor in tulle cap.
As rosy lips without a smile,
The Russian language I deem vile
Without grammatical mistakes.
May be, and this my terror wakes,
The fair of the next generation,
As every journal now entreats,
Will teach grammatical conceits,
Introduce verse in conversation.
But I — what is all this to me?
Will to the old times faithful be.

XXXI

Speech careless, incorrect, but soft,
With inexact pronunciation
Raises within my breast as oft
As formerly much agitation.
Repentance wields not now her spell
And gallicisms I love as well
As the sins of my youthful days
Or Bogdanovitch's sweet lays.(41)
But I must now employ my Muse
With the epistle of my fair;
I promised! — Did I so? — Well, there!
Now I am ready to refuse.
I know that Parny's tender pen(42)
Is no more cherished amongst men.

[Note 41: Hippolyte Bogdanovitch — b. 1743, d. 1803 — though possessing considerable poetical talent was like many other Russian authors more remarkable for successful imitation than for original genius. His most remarkable production is "Doushenka," "The Darling," a composition

somewhat in the style of La Fontaine's "Psyche." Its merit consists in graceful phraseology, and a strong pervading sense of humour.]

[Note 42: Parny — a French poet of the era of the first Napoleon, b. 1753, d. 1814. Introduced to the aged Voltaire during his last visit to Paris, the patriarch laid his hands upon the youth's head and exclaimed: "Mon cher Tibulle." He is chiefly known for his erotic poetry which attracted the affectionate regard of the youthful Pushkin when a student at the Lyceum. We regret to add that, having accepted a pension from Napoleon, Parny forthwith proceeded to damage his literary reputation by inditing an "epic" poem entitled "Goddam! Goddam! par un French — Dog." It is descriptive of the approaching conquest of Britain by Napoleon, and treats the embryo enterprise as if already conducted to a successful conclusion and become matter of history. A good account of the bard and his creations will be found in the Saturday Review of the 2d August 1879.]

XXXII

Bard of the "Feasts," and mournful breast,(43)
If thou wert sitting by my side,
With this immoderate request
I should alarm our friendship tried:
In one of thine enchanting lays
To russify the foreign phrase
Of my impassioned heroine.
Where art thou? Come! pretensions mine
I yield with a low reverence;
But lonely beneath Finnish skies
Where melancholy rocks arise
He wanders in his indolence;
Careless of fame his spirit high
Hears not my importunity!

[Note 43: Evgeny Baratynski, a contemporary of Pushkin and a lyric poet of some originality and talent. The "Feasts" is a short brilliant poem in praise of conviviality. Pushkin is therein praised as the best of companions "beside the bottle."]

XXXIII

Tattiana's letter I possess,
I guard it as a holy thing,
And though I read it with distress,
I'm o'er it ever pondering.
Inspired by whom this tenderness,
This gentle daring who could guess?
Who this soft nonsense could impart,
Imprudent prattle of the heart,
Attractive in its banefulness?
I cannot understand. But lo!
A feeble version read below,

A print without the picture's grace,
Or, as it were, the Freischutz' score
Strummed by a timid schoolgirl o'er.

Tattiana's Letter to Oneguine

I write to you! Is more required?
Can lower depths beyond remain?
'Tis in your power now, if desired,
To crush me with a just disdain.
But if my lot unfortunate
You in the least commiserate
You will not all abandon me.
At first, I clung to secrecy:
Believe me, of my present shame
You never would have heard the name,
If the fond hope I could have fanned
At times, if only once a week,
To see you by our fireside stand,
To listen to the words you speak,
Address to you one single phrase
And then to meditate for days
Of one thing till again we met.
'Tis said you are a misanthrope,
In country solitude you mope,
And we — an unattractive set —
Can hearty welcome give alone.
Why did you visit our poor place?
Forgotten in the village lone,
I never should have seen your face
And bitter torment never known.
The untutored spirit's pangs calmed down
By time (who can anticipate?)
I had found my predestinate,
Become a faithful wife and e'en
A fond and careful mother been.

Another! to none other I
My heart's allegiance can resign,
My doom has been pronounced on high,
'Tis Heaven's will and I am thine.
The sum of my existence gone
But promise of our meeting gave,
I feel thou wast by God sent down
My guardian angel to the grave.
Thou didst to me in dreams appear,

Unseen thou wast already dear.
Thine eye subdued me with strange glance,
I heard thy voice's resonance
Long ago. Dream it cannot be!
Scarce hadst thou entered thee I knew,
I flushed up, stupefied I grew,
And cried within myself: 'tis he!
Is it not truth? in tones suppressed
With thee I conversed when I bore
Comfort and succour to the poor,
And when I prayer to Heaven addressed
To ease the anguish of my breast.
Nay! even as this instant fled,
Was it not thou, O vision bright,
That glimmered through the radiant night
And gently hovered o'er my head?
Was it not thou who thus didst stoop
To whisper comfort, love and hope?
Who art thou? Guardian angel sent
Or torturer malevolent?
Doubt and uncertainty decide:
All this may be an empty dream,
Delusions of a mind untried,
Providence otherwise may deem —
Then be it so! My destiny
From henceforth I confide to thee!
Lo! at thy feet my tears I pour
And thy protection I implore.
Imagine! Here alone am I!
No one my anguish comprehends,
At times my reason almost bends,
And silently I here must die —
But I await thee: scarce alive
My heart with but one look revive;
Or to disturb my dreams approach
Alas! with merited reproach.

'Tis finished. Horrible to read!
With shame I shudder and with dread —
But boldly I myself resign:
Thine honour is my countersign!

XXXIV

Tattiana moans and now she sighs
And in her grasp the letter shakes,

Even the rosy wafer dries
Upon her tongue which fever bakes.
Her head upon her breast declines
And an enchanting shoulder shines
From her half-open vest of night.
But lo! already the moon's light
Is waning. Yonder valley deep
Looms gray behind the mist and morn
Silvers the brook; the shepherd's horn
Arouses rustics from their sleep.
'Tis day, the family downstairs,
But nought for this Tattiana cares.

XXXV

The break of day she doth not see,
But sits in bed with air depressed,
Nor on the letter yet hath she
The image of her seal impressed.
But gray Phillippevna the door
Opened with care, and entering bore
A cup of tea upon a tray.
“'Tis time, my child, arise, I pray!
My beauty, thou art ready too.
My morning birdie, yesternight
I was half silly with affright.
But praised be God! in health art thou!
The pains of night have wholly fled,
Thy cheek is as a poppy red!”

XXXVI

“Ah! nurse, a favour do for me!”
“Command me, darling, what you choose”
“Do not — you might — suspicious be;
But look you — ah! do not refuse.”
“I call to witness God on high — ”
“Then send your grandson quietly
To take this letter to O — Well!
Unto our neighbour. Mind you tell —
Command him not to say a word —
I mean my name not to repeat.”
“To whom is it to go, my sweet?
Of late I have been quite absurd, —
So many neighbours here exist —
Am I to go through the whole list?”

XXXVII

“How dull you are this morning, nurse!”
“My darling, growing old am I!
In age the memory gets worse,
But I was sharp in times gone by.
In times gone by thy bare command — ”
“Oh! nurse, nurse, you don’t understand!
What is thy cleverness to me?
The letter is the thing, you see, —
Oneguine’s letter!” — ”Ah! the thing!
Now don’t be cross with me, my soul,
You know that I am now a fool —
But why are your cheeks whitening?”
“Nothing, good nurse, there’s nothing wrong,
But send your grandson before long.”

XXXVIII

No answer all that day was borne.
Another passed; ‘twas just the same.
Pale as a ghost and dressed since morn
Tattiana waits. No answer came!
Olga’s admirer came that day:
“Tell me, why doth your comrade stay?”
The hostess doth interrogate:
“He hath neglected us of late.” —
Tattiana blushed, her heart beat quick —
“He promised here this day to ride,”
Lenski unto the dame replied,
“The post hath kept him, it is like.”
Shamefaced, Tattiana downward looked
As if he cruelly had joked!

XXXIX

‘Twas dusk! Upon the table bright
Shrill sang the *samovar* at eve,(44)
The china teapot too ye might
In clouds of steam above perceive.
Into the cups already sped
By Olga’s hand distributed
The fragrant tea in darkling stream,
And a boy handed round the cream.
Tania doth by the casement linger
And breathes upon the chilly glass,

Dreaming of what not, pretty lass,
And traces with a slender finger
Upon its damp opacity,
The mystic monogram, O. E.

[Note 44: The samovar, i.e. "self-boiler," is merely an urn for hot water having a fire in the center. We may observe a similar contrivance in our own old-fashioned tea-urns which are provided with a receptacle for a red-hot iron cylinder in center. The tea-pot is usually placed on the top of the samovar.]

XL

In the meantime her spirit sinks,
Her weary eyes are filled with tears —
A horse's hoofs she hears — She shrinks!
Nearer they come — Eugene appears!
Ah! than a spectre from the dead
More swift the room Tattiana fled,
From hall to yard and garden flies,
Not daring to cast back her eyes.
She fears and like an arrow rushes
Through park and meadow, wood and brake,
The bridge and alley to the lake,
Brambles she snaps and lilacs crushes,
The flowerbeds skirts, the brook doth meet,
Till out of breath upon a seat

XLI

She sank. —
"He's here! Eugene is here!
Merciful God, what will he deem?"
Yet still her heart, which torments tear,
Guards fondly hope's uncertain dream.
She waits, on fire her trembling frame —
Will he pursue? — But no one came.
She heard of servant-maids the note,
Who in the orchards gathered fruit,
Singing in chorus all the while.
(This by command; for it was found,
However cherries might abound,
They disappeared by stealth and guile,
So mouths they stopt with song, not fruit —
Device of rural minds acute!)

The Maidens' Song

Young maidens, fair maidens,
Friends and companions,
Disport yourselves, maidens,
Arouse yourselves, fair ones.
Come sing we in chorus
The secrets of maidens.
Allure the young gallant
With dance and with song.
As we lure the young gallant,
Espy him approaching,
Disperse yourselves, darlings,
And pelt him with cherries,
With cherries, red currants,
With raspberries, cherries.
Approach not to hearken
To secrets of virgins,
Approach not to gaze at
The frolics of maidens.

XLII

They sang, whilst negligently seated,
Attentive to the echoing sound,
Tattiana with impatience waited
Until her heart less high should bound —
Till the fire in her cheek decreased;
But tremor still her frame possessed,
Nor did her blushes fade away,
More crimson every moment they.
Thus shines the wretched butterfly,
With iridescent wing doth flap
When captured in a schoolboy's cap;
Thus shakes the hare when suddenly
She from the winter corn espies
A sportsman who in covert lies.

XLIII

But finally she heaves a sigh,
And rising from her bench proceeds;
But scarce had turned the corner nigh,
Which to the neighbouring alley leads,
When Eugene like a ghost did rise
Before her straight with roguish eyes.
Tattiana faltered, and became
Scarlet as burnt by inward flame.

But this adventure's consequence
To-day, my friends, at any rate,
I am not strong enough to state;
I, after so much eloquence,
Must take a walk and rest a bit —
Some day I'll somehow finish it.

CANTO THE FOURTH

Rural Life

‘La Morale est dans la nature des choses.’ — Necker

Canto The Fourth

[Mikhailovskoe, 1825]

I

THE less we love a lady fair
The easier ‘tis to gain her grace,
And the more surely we ensnare
Her in the pitfalls which we place.
Time was when cold seduction strove
To swagger as the art of love,
Everywhere trumpeting its feats,
Not seeking love but sensual sweets.
But this amusement delicate
Was worthy of that old baboon,
Our fathers used to dote upon;
The Lovelaces are out of date,
Their glory with their heels of red
And long perukes hath vanished.

II

For who imposture can endure,
A constant harping on one tune,
Serious endeavours to assure
What everybody long has known;
Ever to hear the same replies
And overcome antipathies
Which never have existed, e’en
In little maidens of thirteen?
And what like menaces fatigues,
Entreaties, oaths, fictitious fear,
Epistles of six sheets or near,
Rings, tears, deceptions and intrigues,
Aunts, mothers and their scrutiny,
And husbands’ tedious amity?

III

Such were the musings of Eugene.
He in the early years of life
Had a deluded victim been
Of error and the passions' strife.
By daily life deteriorated,
Awhile this beauty captivated,
And that no longer could inspire.
Slowly exhausted by desire,
Yet satiated with success,
In solitude or worldly din,
He heard his soul's complaint within,
With laughter smothered weariness:
And thus he spent eight years of time,
Destroyed the blossom of his prime.

IV

Though beauty he no more adored,
He still made love in a queer way;
Rebuffed — as quickly reassured,
Jilted — glad of a holiday.
Without enthusiasm he met
The fair, nor parted with regret,
Scarce mindful of their love and guile.
Thus a guest with composure will
To take a hand at whist oft come:
He takes his seat, concludes his game,
And straight returning whence he came,
Tranquilly goes to sleep at home,
And in the morning doth not know
Whither that evening he will go.

V

However, Tania's letter reading,
Eugene was touched with sympathy;
The language of her girlish pleading
Aroused in him sweet reverie.
He called to mind Tattiana's grace,
Pallid and melancholy face,
And in a vision, sinless, bright,
His spirit sank with strange delight.
May be the empire of the sense,
Regained authority awhile,
But he desired not to beguile
Such open-hearted innocence.

But to the garden once again
Wherein we lately left the twain.

VI

Two minutes they in silence spent,
Oneguine then approached and said:
“You have a letter to me sent.
Do not excuse yourself. I read
Confessions which a trusting heart
May well in innocence impart.
Charming is your sincerity,
Feelings which long had ceased to be
It wakens in my breast again.
But I came not to adulate:
Your frankness I shall compensate
By an avowal just as plain.
An ear to my confession lend;
To thy decree my will I bend.

VII

“If the domestic hearth could bless —
My sum of happiness contained;
If wife and children to possess
A happy destiny ordained:
If in the scenes of home I might
E’en for an instant find delight,
Then, I say truly, none but thee
I would desire my bride to be —
I say without poetic phrase,
Found the ideal of my youth,
Thee only would I choose, in truth,
As partner of my mournful days,
Thee only, pledge of all things bright,
And be as happy — as I might.

VIII

“But strange am I to happiness;
‘Tis foreign to my cast of thought;
Me your perfections would not bless;
I am not worthy them in aught;
And honestly ‘tis my belief
Our union would produce but grief.
Though now my love might be intense,
Habit would bring indifference.

I see you weep. Those tears of yours
Tend not my heart to mitigate,
But merely to exasperate;
Judge then what roses would be ours,
What pleasures Hymen would prepare
For us, may be for many a year.

IX

“What can be drearier than the house,
Wherein the miserable wife
Deplores a most unworthy spouse
And leads a solitary life?
The tiresome man, her value knowing,
Yet curses on his fate bestowing,
Is full of frigid jealousy,
Mute, solemn, frowning gloomily.
Such am I. This did ye expect,
When in simplicity ye wrote
Your innocent and charming note
With so much warmth and intellect?
Hath fate apportioned unto thee
This lot in life with stern decree?

X

“Ideas and time ne’er backward move;
My soul I cannot renovate —
I love you with a brother’s love,
Perchance one more affectionate.
Listen to me without disdain.
A maid hath oft, may yet again
Replace the visions fancy drew;
Thus trees in spring their leaves renew
As in their turn the seasons roll.
‘Tis evidently Heaven’s will
You fall in love again. But still —
Learn to possess more self-control.
Not all will like myself proceed —
And thoughtlessness to woe might lead.”

XI

Thus did our friend Oneguine preach:
Tattiana, dim with tears her eyes,
Attentive listened to his speech,
All breathless and without replies.

His arm he offers. Mute and sad
(*Mechanically*, let us add),
Tattiana doth accept his aid;
And, hanging down her head, the maid
Around the garden homeward hies.
Together they returned, nor word
Of censure for the same incurred;
The country hath its liberties
And privileges nice allowed,
Even as Moscow, city proud.

XII

Confess, O ye who this peruse,
Oneguine acted very well
By poor Tattiana in the blues;
'Twas not the first time, I can tell
You, he a noble mind disclosed,
Though some men, evilly disposed,
Spared him not their asperities.
His friends and also enemies
(One and the same thing it may be)
Esteemed him much as the world goes.
Yes! every one must have his foes,
But Lord! from friends deliver me!
The deuce take friends, my friends, amends
I've had to make for having friends!

XIII

But how? Quite so. Though I dismiss
Dark, unavailing reverie,
I just hint, in parenthesis,
There is no stupid calumny
Born of a babbler in a loft
And by the world repeated oft,
There is no fishmarket retort
And no ridiculous report,
Which your true friend with a sweet smile
Where fashionable circles meet
A hundred times will not repeat,
Quite inadvertently meanwhile;
And yet he in your cause would strive
And loves you as — a relative!

XIV

Ahem! Ahem! My reader noble,
Are all your relatives quite well?
Permit me; is it worth the trouble
For your instruction here to tell
What I by relatives conceive?
These are your relatives, believe:
Those whom we ought to love, caress,
With spiritual tenderness;
Whom, as the custom is of men,
We visit about Christmas Day,
Or by a card our homage pay,
That until Christmas comes again
They may forget that we exist.
And so — God bless them, if He list.

XV

In this the love of the fair sex
Beats that of friends and relatives:
In love, although its tempests vex,
Our liberty at least survives:
Agreed! but then the whirl of fashion,
The natural fickleness of passion,
The torrent of opinion,
And the fair sex as light as down!
Besides the hobbies of a spouse
Should be respected throughout life
By every proper-minded wife,
And this the faithful one allows,
When in an instant she is lost, —
Satan will jest, and at love's cost.

XVI

Oh! where bestow our love? Whom trust?
Where is he who doth not deceive?
Who words and actions will adjust
To standards in which we believe?
Oh! who is not calumnious?
Who labours hard to humour us?
To whom are our misfortunes grief
And who is not a tiresome thief?
My venerated reader, oh!
Cease the pursuit of shadows vain,
Spare yourself unavailing pain
And all your love on self bestow;

A worthy object 'tis, and well
I know there's none more amiable.

XVII

But from the interview what flowed?
Alas! It is not hard to guess.
The insensate fire of love still glowed
Nor discontinued to distress
A spirit which for sorrow yearned.
Tattiana more than ever burned
With hopeless passion: from her bed
Sweet slumber winged its way and fled.
Her health, life's sweetness and its bloom,
Her smile and maidenly repose,
All vanished as an echo goes.
Across her youth a shade had come,
As when the tempest's veil is drawn
Across the smiling face of dawn.

XVIII

Alas! Tattiana fades away,
Grows pale and sinks, but nothing says;
Listless is she the livelong day
Nor interest in aught betrays.
Shaking with serious air the head,
In whispers low the neighbours said:
'Tis time she to the altar went!
But enough! Now, 'tis my intent
The imagination to enliven
With love which happiness extends;
Against my inclination, friends,
By sympathy I have been driven.
Forgive me! Such the love I bear
My heroine, Tattiana dear.

XIX

Vladimir, hourly more a slave
To youthful Olga's beauty bright,
Into delicious bondage gave
His ardent soul with full delight.
Always together, eventide
Found them in darkness side by side,
At morn, hand clasped in hand, they rove
Around the meadow and the grove.

And what resulted? Drunk with love,
But with confused and bashful air,
Lenski at intervals would dare,
If Olga smilingly approve,
Dally with a dishevelled tress
Or kiss the border of her dress.

XX

To Olga frequently he would
Some nice instructive novel read,
Whose author nature understood
Better than Chateaubriand did
Yet sometimes pages two or three
(Nonsense and pure absurdity,
For maiden's hearing deemed unfit),
He somewhat blushing would omit:
Far from the rest the pair would creep
And (elbows on the table) they
A game of chess would often play,
Buried in meditation deep,
Till absently Vladimir took
With his own pawn alas! his rook!

XXI

Homeward returning, he at home
Is occupied with Olga fair,
An album, fly-leaf of the tome,
He leisurely adorns for her.
Landscapes thereon he would design,
A tombstone, Aphrodite's shrine,
Or, with a pen and colours fit,
A dove which on a lyre doth sit;
The "in memoriam" pages sought,
Where many another hand had signed
A tender couplet he combined,
A register of fleeting thought,
A flimsy trace of musings past
Which might for many ages last.

XXII

Surely ye all have overhauled
A country damsel's album trim,
Which all her darling friends have scrawled
From first to last page to the rim.

Behold! orthography despising,
Metreless verses recognizing
By friendship how they were abused,
Hewn, hacked, and otherwise ill-used.
Upon the opening page ye find:
Qu'ecrirer-vouz sur ces tablettes?
Subscribed, *toujours a vous, Annette;*
And on the last one, underlined:
Who in thy love finds more delight
Beyond this may attempt to write.

XXIII

Infallibly you there will find
Two hearts, a torch, of flowers a wreath,
And vows will probably be signed:
Affectionately yours till death.
Some army poet therein may
Have smuggled his flagitious lay.
In such an album with delight
I would, my friends, inscriptions write,
Because I should be sure, meanwhile,
My verses, kindly meant, would earn
Delighted glances in return;
That afterwards with evil smile
They would not solemnly debate
If cleverly or not I prate.

XXIV

But, O ye tomes without compare,
Which from the devil's bookcase start,
Albums magnificent which scare
The fashionable rhymester's heart!
Yea! although rendered beauteous
By Tolstoy's pencil marvellous,
Though Baratynski verses penned,(45)
The thunderbolt on you descend!
Whene'er a brilliant courtly dame
Presents her quarto amiably,
Despair and anger seize on me,
And a malicious epigram
Trembles upon my lips from spite, —
And madrigals I'm asked to write!

[Note 45: Count Tolstoy, a celebrated artist who subsequently became Vice-President of the Academy of Arts at Saint Petersburg. Baratynski, see Note 43.]

XXV

But Lenski madrigals ne'er wrote
In Olga's album, youthful maid,
To purest love he tuned his note
Nor frigid adulation paid.
What never was remarked or heard
Of Olga he in song averred;
His elegies, which plenteous streamed,
Both natural and truthful seemed.
Thus thou, Yazykoff, dost arise(46)
In amorous flights when so inspired,
Singing God knows what maid admired,
And all thy precious elegies,
Sometime collected, shall relate
The story of thy life and fate.

[Note 46: Yazykoff, a poet contemporary with Pushkin. He was an author of promise — unfulfilled.]

XXVI

Since Fame and Freedom he adored,
Incited by his stormy Muse
Odes Lenski also had outpoured,
But Olga would not such peruse.
When poets lachrymose recite
Beneath the eyes of ladies bright
Their own productions, some insist
No greater pleasure can exist
Just so! that modest swain is blest
Who reads his visionary theme
To the fair object of his dream,
A beauty languidly at rest,
Yes, happy — though she at his side
By other thoughts be occupied.

XXVII

But I the products of my Muse,
Consisting of harmonious lays,
To my old nurse alone peruse,
Companion of my childhood's days.
Or, after dinner's dull repast,
I by the button-hole seize fast
My neighbour, who by chance drew near,
And breathe a drama in his ear.

Or else (I deal not here in jokes),
Exhausted by my woes and rhymes,
I sail upon my lake at times
And terrify a swarm of ducks,
Who, heard the music of my lay,
Take to their wings and fly away.

XXVIII

But to Oneguine! *A propos!*
Friends, I must your indulgence pray.
His daily occupations, lo!
Minutely I will now portray.
A hermit's life Oneguine led,
At seven in summer rose from bed,
And clad in airy costume took
His course unto the running brook.
There, aping Gulnare's bard, he spanned
His Hellespont from bank to bank,
And then a cup of coffee drank,
Some wretched journal in his hand;
Then dressed himself...(*)

[Note: Stanza left unfinished by the author.]

XXIX

Sound sleep, books, walking, were his bliss,
The murmuring brook, the woodland shade,
The uncontaminated kiss
Of a young dark-eyed country maid,
A fiery, yet well-broken horse,
A dinner, whimsical each course,
A bottle of a vintage white
And solitude and calm delight.
Such was Oneguine's sainted life,
And such unconsciously he led,
Nor marked how summer's prime had fled
In aimless ease and far from strife,
The curse of commonplace delight.
And town and friends forgotten quite.

XXX

This northern summer of our own,
On winters of the south a skit,
Glimmers and dies. This is well known,

Though we will not acknowledge it.
Already Autumn chilled the sky,
The tiny sun shone less on high
And shorter had the days become.
The forests in mysterious gloom
Were stripped with melancholy sound,
Upon the earth a mist did lie
And many a caravan on high
Of clamorous geese flew southward bound.
A weary season was at hand —
November at the gate did stand.

XXXI

The morn arises foggy, cold,
The silent fields no peasant nears,
The wolf upon the highways bold
With his ferocious mate appears.
Detecting him the passing horse
snorts, and his rider bends his course
And wisely gallops to the hill.
No more at dawn the shepherd will
Drive out the cattle from their shed,
Nor at the hour of noon with sound
Of horn in circle call them round.
Singing inside her hut the maid
Spins, whilst the friend of wintry night,
The pine-torch, by her crackles bright.

XXXII

Already crisp hoar frosts impose
O'er all a sheet of silvery dust
(Readers expect the rhyme of *rose*,
There! take it quickly, if ye must).
Behold! than polished floor more nice
The shining river clothed in ice;
A joyous troop of little boys
Engrave the ice with strident noise.
A heavy goose on scarlet feet,
Thinking to float upon the stream,
Descends the bank with care extreme,
But staggers, slips, and falls. We greet
The first bright wreathing storm of snow
Which falls in starry flakes below.

XXXIII

How in the country pass this time?
Walking? The landscape tires the eye
In winter by its blank and dim
And naked uniformity.
On horseback gallop o'er the steppe!
Your steed, though rough-shod, cannot keep
His footing on the treacherous rime
And may fall headlong any time.
Alone beneath your roof-tree stay
And read De Pradt or Walter Scott!(47)
Keep your accounts! You'd rather not?
Then get mad drunk or wroth; the day
Will pass; the same to-morrow try —
You'll spend your winter famously!

[Note 47: The Abbe de Pradt: b. 1759, d. 1837. A political pamphleteer of the French Revolution: was at first an emigre, but made his peace with Napoleon and was appointed Archbishop of Malines.]

XXXIV

A true Childe Harold my Eugene
To idle musing was a prey;
At morn an icy bath within
He sat, and then the livelong day,
Alone within his habitation
And buried deep in meditation,
He round the billiard-table stalked,
The balls impelled, the blunt cue chalked;
When evening o'er the landscape looms,
Billiards abandoned, cue forgot,
A table to the fire is brought,
And he waits dinner. Lenski comes,
Driving abreast three horses gray.
"Bring dinner now without delay!"

XXXV

Upon the table in a trice
Of widow Clicquot or Moet
A blessed bottle, placed in ice,
For the young poet they display.
Like Hippocrene it scatters light,
Its ebullition foaming white
(Like other things I could relate)
My heart of old would captivate.

The last poor obol I was worth —
Was it not so? — for thee I gave,
And thy inebriating wave
Full many a foolish prank brought forth;
And oh! what verses, what delights,
Delicious visions, jests and fights!

XXXVI

Alas! my stomach it betrays
With its exhilarating flow,
And I confess that now-a-days
I prefer sensible Bordeaux.
To cope with Ay no more I dare,
For Ay is like a mistress fair,
Seductive, animated, bright,
But wilful, frivolous, and light.
But thou, Bordeaux, art like the friend
Who in the agony of grief
Is ever ready with relief,
Assistance ever will extend,
Or quietly partake our woe.
All hail! my good old friend Bordeaux!

XXXVII

The fire sinks low. An ashy cloak
The golden ember now enshrines,
And barely visible the smoke
Upward in a thin stream inclines.
But little warmth the fireplace lends,
Tobacco smoke the flue ascends,
The goblet still is bubbling bright —
Outside descend the mists of night.
How pleasantly the evening jogs
When o'er a glass with friends we prate
Just at the hour we designate
The time between the wolf and dogs —
I cannot tell on what pretence —
But lo! the friends to chat commence.

XXXVIII

“How are our neighbours fair, pray tell,
Tattiana, saucy Olga thine?”
“The family are all quite well —
Give me just half a glass of wine —

They sent their compliments — but oh!
How charming Olga's shoulders grow!
Her figure perfect grows with time!
She is an angel! We sometime
Must visit them. Come! you must own,
My friend, 'tis but to pay a debt,
For twice you came to them and yet
You never since your nose have shown.
But stay! A dolt am I who speak!
They have invited you this week."

XXXIX

"Me?" — "Yes! It is Tattiana's fete
Next Saturday. The Larina
Told me to ask you. Ere that date
Make up your mind to go there." — "Ah!
It will be by a mob beset
Of every sort and every set!"
"Not in the least, assured am I!"
"Who will be there?" — "The family.
Do me a favour and appear.
Will you?" — "Agreed." — "I thank you, friend,"
And saying this Vladimir drained
His cup unto his maiden dear.
Then touching Olga they depart
In fresh discourse. Such, love, thou art!

XL

He was most gay. The happy date
In three weeks would arrive for them;
The secrets of the marriage state
And love's delicious diadem
With rapturous longing he awaits,
Nor in his dreams anticipates
Hymen's embarrassments, distress,
And freezing fits of weariness.
Though we, of Hymen foes, meanwhile,
In life domestic see a string
Of pictures painful harrowing,
A novel in Lafontaine's style,
My wretched Lenski's fate I mourn,
He seemed for matrimony born.

XLI

He was beloved: or say at least,
He thought so, and existence charmed.
The credulous indeed are blest,
And he who, jealousy disarmed,
In sensual sweets his soul doth steep
As drunken tramps at nightfall sleep,
Or, parable more flattering,
As butterflies to blossoms cling.
But wretched who anticipates,
Whose brain no fond illusions daze,
Who every gesture, every phrase
In true interpretation hates:
Whose heart experience icy made
And yet oblivion forbade.

CANTO THE FIFTH

The Fete

‘Oh, do not dream these fearful dreams,
O my Svetlana.’ — Joukovski

Canto The Fifth

[*Note: Mikhailovskoe, 1825-6*]

I

That year the autumn season late
Kept lingering on as loath to go,
All Nature winter seemed to await,
Till January fell no snow —
The third at night. Tattiana wakes
Betimes, and sees, when morning breaks,
Park, garden, palings, yard below
And roofs near morn blanched o’er with snow;
Upon the windows tracery,
The trees in silvery array,
Down in the courtyard magpies gay,
And the far mountains daintily
O’erspread with Winter’s carpet bright,
All so distinct, and all so white!

II

Winter! The peasant blithely goes
To labour in his sledge forgot,
His pony sniffing the fresh snows
Just manages a feeble trot
Though deep he sinks into the drift;
Forth the *kibitka* gallops swift,(48)
Its driver seated on the rim
In scarlet sash and sheepskin trim;
Yonder the household lad doth run,
Placed in a sledge his terrier black,
Himself transformed into a hack;
To freeze his finger hath begun,
He laughs, although it aches from cold,
His mother from the door doth scold.

[Note 48: The "kibitka," properly speaking, whether on wheels or runners, is a vehicle with a hood not unlike a big cradle.]

III

In scenes like these it may be though,
Ye feel but little interest,
They are all natural and low,
Are not with elegance impressed.
Another bard with art divine
Hath pictured in his gorgeous line
The first appearance of the snows
And all the joys which Winter knows.
He will delight you, I am sure,
When he in ardent verse portrays
Secret excursions made in sleighs;
But competition I abjure
Either with him or thee in song,
Bard of the Finnish maiden young.(49)

[Note 49: The allusions in the foregoing stanza are in the first place to a poem entitled "The First Snow," by Prince Viazemski and secondly to "Eda," by Baratynski, a poem descriptive of life in Finland.]

IV

Tattiana, Russian to the core,
Herself not knowing well the reason,
The Russian winter did adore
And the cold beauties of the season:
On sunny days the glistening rime,
Sledging, the snows, which at the time
Of sunset glow with rosy light,
The misty evenings ere Twelfth Night.
These evenings as in days of old
The Larinas would celebrate,
The servants used to congregate
And the young ladies fortunes told,
And every year distributed
Journeys and warriors to wed.

V

Tattiana in traditions old
Believed, the people's wisdom weird,
In dreams and what the moon foretold

And what she from the cards inferred.
Omens inspired her soul with fear,
Mysteriously all objects near
A hidden meaning could impart,
Presentiments oppressed her heart.
Lo! the prim cat upon the stove
With one paw strokes her face and purrs,
Tattiana certainly infers
That guests approach: and when above
The new moon's crescent slim she spied,
Suddenly to the left hand side,

VI

She trembled and grew deadly pale.
Or a swift meteor, may be,
Across the gloom of heaven would sail
And disappear in space; then she
Would haste in agitation dire
To mutter her concealed desire
Ere the bright messenger had set.
When in her walks abroad she met
A friar black approaching near,(50)
Or a swift hare from mead to mead
Had run across her path at speed,
Wholly beside herself with fear,
Anticipating woe she pined,
Certain misfortune near opined.

[Note 50: The Russian clergy are divided into two classes: the white or secular, which is made up of the mass of parish priests, and the black who inhabit the monasteries, furnish the high dignitaries of the Church, and constitute that swarm of useless drones for whom Peter the Great felt such a deep repugnance.]

VII

Wherefore? She found a secret joy
In horror for itself alone,
Thus Nature doth our souls alloy,
Thus her perversity hath shown.
Twelfth Night approaches. Merry eves!(51)
When thoughtless youth whom nothing grieves,
Before whose inexperienced sight
Life lies extended, vast and bright,
To peer into the future tries.
Old age through spectacles too peers,
Although the destined coffin nears,

Having lost all in life we prize.
It matters not. Hope e'en to these
With childlike lisp will lie to please.

[Note 51: Refers to the "Sviatki" or Holy Nights between Christmas Eve and Twelfth Night. Divination, or the telling of fortunes by various expedients, is the favourite pastime on these occasions.]

VIII

Tattiana gazed with curious eye
On melted wax in water poured;
The clue unto some mystery
She deemed its outline might afford.
Rings from a dish of water full
In order due the maidens pull;
But when Tattiana's hand had ta'en
A ring she heard the ancient strain:
*The peasants there are rich as kings,
They shovel silver with a spade,
He whom we sing to shall be made
Happy and glorious.* But this brings
With sad refrain misfortune near.
Girls the *kashourka* much prefer.(52)

[Note 52: During the "sviatki" it is a common custom for the girls to assemble around a table on which is placed a dish or basin of water which contains a ring. Each in her turn extracts the ring from the basin whilst the remainder sing in chorus the "podbliudni pessni," or "dish songs" before mentioned. These are popularly supposed to indicate the fortunes of the immediate holder of the ring. The first-named lines foreshadow death; the latter, the "kashourka," or "kitten song," indicates approaching marriage. It commences thus: "The cat asked the kitten to sleep on the stove."]

IX

Frosty the night; the heavens shone;
The wondrous host of heavenly spheres
Sailed silently in unison —
Tattiana in the yard appears
In a half-open dressing-gown
And bends her mirror on the moon,
But trembling on the mirror dark
The sad moon only could remark.
List! the snow crunches — he draws nigh!
The girl on tiptoe forward bounds
And her voice sweeter than the sounds
Of clarinet or flute doth cry:
"What is your name?" The boor looked dazed,

And “Agathon” replied, amazed.(53)

[Note 53: The superstition is that the name of the future husband may thus be discovered.]

X

Tattiana (nurse the project planned)
By night prepared for sorcery,
And in the bathroom did command
To lay two covers secretly.
But sudden fear assailed Tattiana,
And I, remembering Svetlana,(54)
Become alarmed. So never mind!
I’m not for witchcraft now inclined.
So she her silken sash unlaced,
Undressed herself and went to bed
And soon Lel hovered o’er her head.(55)
Beneath her downy pillow placed,
A little virgin mirror peeps.
‘Tis silent all. Tattiana sleeps.

[Note 54: See Note 30.]

[Note 55: Lel, in Slavonic mythology, corresponds to the Morpheus of the Latins. The word is evidently connected with the verb “leleyat” to fondle or soothe, likewise with our own word “to lull.”]

XI

A dreadful sleep Tattiana sleeps.
She dreamt she journeyed o’er a field
All covered up with snow in heaps,
By melancholy fogs concealed.
Amid the snowdrifts which surround
A stream, by winter’s ice unbound,
Impetuously clove its way
With boiling torrent dark and gray;
Two poles together glued by ice,
A fragile bridge and insecure,
Spanned the unbridled torrent o’er;
Beside the thundering abyss
Tattiana in despair unfeigned
Rooted unto the spot remained.

XII

As if against obstruction sore
Tattiana o'er the stream complained;
To help her to the other shore
No one appeared to lend a hand.
But suddenly a snowdrift stirs,
And what from its recess appears?
A bristly bear of monstrous size!
He roars, and "Ah!" Tattiana cries.
He offers her his murderous paw;
She nerves herself from her alarm
And leans upon the monster's arm,
With footsteps tremulous with awe
Passes the torrent But alack!
Bruin is marching at her back!

XIII

She, to turn back her eyes afraid,
Accelerates her hasty pace,
But cannot anyhow evade
Her shaggy myrmidon in chase.
The bear rolls on with many a grunt:
A forest now she sees in front
With fir-trees standing motionless
In melancholy loveliness,
Their branches by the snow bowed down.
Through aspens, limes and birches bare,
The shining orbs of night appear;
There is no path; the storm hath strewn
Both bush and brake, ravine and steep,
And all in snow is buried deep.

XIV

The wood she enters — bear behind, —
In snow she sinks up to the knee;
Now a long branch itself entwined
Around her neck, now violently
Away her golden earrings tore;
Now the sweet little shoes she wore,
Grown clammy, stick fast in the snow;
Her handkerchief she loses now;
No time to pick it up! afraid,
She hears the bear behind her press,
Nor dares the skirting of her dress
For shame lift up the modest maid.

She runs, the bear upon her trail,
Until her powers of running fail.

XV

She sank upon the snow. But Bruin
Adroitly seized and carried her;
Submissive as if in a swoon,
She cannot draw a breath or stir.
He dragged her by a forest road
Till amid trees a hovel showed,
By barren snow heaped up and bound,
A tangled wilderness around.
Bright blazed the window of the place,
Within resounded shriek and shout:
“My chum lives here,” Bruin grunts out.
“Warm yourself here a little space!”
Straight for the entrance then he made
And her upon the threshold laid.

XVI

Recovering, Tania gazes round;
Bear gone — she at the threshold placed;
Inside clink glasses, cries resound
As if it were some funeral feast.
But deeming all this nonsense pure,
She peeped through a chink of the door.
What doth she see? Around the board
Sit many monstrous shapes abhorred.
A canine face with horns thereon,
Another with cock’s head appeared,
Here an old witch with hirsute beard,
There an imperious skeleton;
A dwarf adorned with tail, again
A shape half cat and half a crane.

XVII

Yet ghastlier, yet more wonderful,
A crab upon a spider rides,
Perched on a goose’s neck a skull
In scarlet cap revolving glides.
A windmill too a jig performs
And wildly waves its arms and storms;
Barking, songs, whistling, laughter coarse,
The speech of man and tramp of horse.

But wide Tattiana oped her eyes
When in that company she saw
Him who inspired both love and awe,
The hero we immortalize.
Oneguine sat the table by
And viewed the door with cunning eye.

XVIII

All bustle when he makes a sign:
He drinks, all drink and loudly call;
He smiles, in laughter all combine;
He knits his brows — 'tis silent all.
He there is master — that is plain;
Tattiana courage doth regain
And grown more curious by far
Just placed the entrance door ajar.
The wind rose instantly, blew out
The fire of the nocturnal lights;
A trouble fell upon the sprites;
Oneguine lightning glances shot;
Furious he from the table rose;
All arise. To the door he goes.

XIX

Terror assails her. Hastily
Tattiana would attempt to fly,
She cannot — then impatiently
She strains her throat to force a cry —
She cannot — Eugene oped the door
And the young girl appeared before
Those hellish phantoms. Peals arise
Of frantic laughter, and all eyes
And hoofs and crooked snouts and paws,
Tails which a bushy tuft adorns,
Whiskers and bloody tongues and horns,
Sharp rows of tushes, bony claws,
Are turned upon her. All combine
In one great shout: she's mine! she's mine!

XX

"Mine!" cried Eugene with savage tone.
The troop of apparitions fled,
And in the frosty night alone
Remained with him the youthful maid.

With tranquil air Oneguine leads
Tattiana to a corner, bids
Her on a shaky bench sit down;
His head sinks slowly, rests upon
Her shoulder — Olga swiftly came —
And Lenski followed — a light broke —
His fist Oneguine fiercely shook
And gazed around with eyes of flame;
The unbidden guests he roughly chides —
Tattiana motionless abides.

XXI

The strife grew furious and Eugene
Grasped a long knife and instantly
Struck Lenski dead — across the scene
Dark shadows thicken — a dread cry
Was uttered, and the cabin shook —
Tattiana terrified awoke.
She gazed around her — it was day.
Lo! through the frozen windows play
Aurora's ruddy rays of light —
The door flew open — Olga came,
More blooming than the Boreal flame
And swifter than the swallow's flight.
"Come," she cried, "sister, tell me e'en
Whom you in slumber may have seen."

XXII

But she, her sister never heeding,
With book in hand reclined in bed,
Page after page continued reading,
But no reply unto her made.
Although her book did not contain
The bard's enthusiastic strain,
Nor precepts sage nor pictures e'en,
Yet neither Virgil nor Racine
Nor Byron, Walter Scott, nor Seneca,
Nor the *Journal des Modes*, I vouch,
Ever absorbed a maid so much:
Its name, my friends, was Martin Zadeka,
The chief of the Chaldean wise,
Who dreams expound and prophecies.

XXIII

Brought by a pedlar vagabond
Unto their solitude one day,
This monument of thought profound
Tattiana purchased with a stray
Tome of “Malvina,” and but three(56)
And a half rubles down gave she;
Also, to equalise the scales,
She got a book of nursery tales,
A grammar, likewise Petriads two,
Marmontel also, tome the third;
Tattiana every day conferred
With Martin Zadeka. In woe
She consolation thence obtained —
Inseparable they remained.

[Note 56: “Malvina,” a romance by Madame Cottin.]

XXIV

The dream left terror in its train.
Not knowing its interpretation,
Tania the meaning would obtain
Of such a dread hallucination.
Tattiana to the index flies
And alphabetically tries
The words *bear, bridge, fir, darkness, bog,*
Raven, snowstorm, tempest, fog,
Et cetera; but nothing showed
Her Martin Zadeka in aid,
Though the foul vision promise made
Of a most mournful episode,
And many a day thereafter laid
A load of care upon the maid.

XXV

“But lo! forth from the valleys dun
With purple hand Aurora leads,
Swift following in her wake, the sun,”(57)
And a grand festival proceeds.
The Larinas were since sunrise
O’erwhelmed with guests; by families
The neighbours come, in sledge approach,
Britzka, kibitka, or in coach.
Crush and confusion in the hall,
Latest arrivals’ salutations,

Barking, young ladies' osculations,
Shouts, laughter, jamming 'gainst the wall,
Bows and the scrape of many feet,
Nurses who scream and babes who bleat.

[Note 57: The above three lines are a parody on the turgid style of Lomonosoff, a literary man of the second Catherine's era.]

XXVI

Bringing his partner corpulent
Fat Poustiakoff drove to the door;
Gvozdzine, a landlord excellent,
Oppressor of the wretched poor;
And the Skatenines, aged pair,
With all their progeny were there,
Who from two years to thirty tell;
Petoushkoff, the provincial swell;
Bouyanoff too, my cousin, wore(58)
His wadded coat and cap with peak
(Surely you know him as I speak);
And Flianoff, pensioned councillor,
Rogue and extortioner of yore,
Now buffoon, glutton, and a bore.

[Note 58: Pushkin calls Bouyanoff his cousin because he is a character in the "Dangerous Neighbour," a poem by Vassili Pushkin, the poet's uncle.]

XXVII

The family of Kharlikoff,
Came with Monsieur Triquet, a prig,
Who arrived lately from Tamboff,
In spectacles and chestnut wig.
Like a true Frenchman, couplets wrought
In Tania's praise in pouch he brought,
Known unto children perfectly:
Reveillez-vous, belle endormie.
Among some ancient ballads thrust,
He found them in an almanac,
And the sagacious Triquet back
To light had brought them from their dust,
Whilst he "belle Nina" had the face
By "belle Tattiana" to replace.

XXVIII

Lo! from the nearest barrack came,
Of old maids the divinity,
And comfort of each country dame,
The captain of a company.
He enters. Ah! good news to-day!
The military band will play.
The colonel sent it. Oh! delight!
So there will be a dance to-night.
Girls in anticipation skip!
But dinner-time comes. Two and two
They hand in hand to table go.
The maids beside Tattiana keep —
Men opposite. The cross they sign
And chattering loud sit down to dine.

XXIX

Ceased for a space all chattering.
Jaws are at work. On every side
Plates, knives and forks are clattering
And ringing wine-glasses are plied.
But by degrees the crowd begin
To raise a clamour and a din:
They laugh, they argue, and they bawl,
They shout and no one lists at all.
The doors swing open: Lenski makes
His entrance with Oneguine. "Ah!
At last the author!" cries Mamma.
The guests make room; aside each takes
His chair, plate, knife and fork in haste;
The friends are called and quickly placed.

XXX

Right opposite Tattiana placed,
She, than the morning moon more pale,
More timid than a doe long chased,
Lifts not her eyes which swimming fail.
Anew the flames of passion start
Within her; she is sick at heart;
The two friends' compliments she hears
Not, and a flood of bitter tears
With effort she restrains. Well nigh
The poor girl fell into a faint,
But strength of mind and self-restraint
Prevailed at last. She in reply

Said something in an undertone
And at the table sat her down.

XXXI

To tragedy, the fainting fit,
And female tears hysterical,
Oneguine could not now submit,
For long he had endured them all.
Our misanthrope was full of ire,
At a great feast against desire,
And marking Tania's agitation,
Cast down his eyes in trepidation
And sulked in silent indignation;
Swearing how Lenski he would rile,
Avenge himself in proper style.
Triumphant by anticipation,
Caricatures he now designed
Of all the guests within his mind.

XXXII

Certainly not Eugene alone
Tattiana's trouble might have spied,
But that the eyes of every one
By a rich pie were occupied —
Unhappily too salt by far;
And that a bottle sealed with tar
Appeared, Don's effervescing boast,(59)
Between the blanc-mange and the roast;
Behind, of glasses an array,
Tall, slender, like thy form designed,
Zizi, thou mirror of my mind,
Fair object of my guileless lay,
Seductive cup of love, whose flow
Made me so tipsy long ago!

[Note 59: The Donskoe Champanskoe is a species of sparkling wine manufactured in the vicinity of the river Don.]

XXXIII

From the moist cork the bottle freed
With loud explosion, the bright wine
Hissed forth. With serious air indeed,
Long tortured by his lay divine,
Triquet arose, and for the bard

The company deep silence guard.
Tania well nigh expired when he
Turned to her and discordantly
Intoned it, manuscript in hand.
Voices and hands applaud, and she
Must bow in common courtesy;
The poet, modest though so grand,
Drank to her health in the first place,
Then handed her the song with grace.

XXXIV

Congratulations, toasts resound,
Tattiana thanks to all returned,
But, when Oneguine's turn came round,
The maiden's weary eye which yearned,
Her agitation and distress
Aroused in him some tenderness.
He bowed to her nor silence broke,
But somehow there shone in his look
The witching light of sympathy;
I know not if his heart felt pain
Or if he meant to flirt again,
From habit or maliciously,
But kindness from his eye had beamed
And to revive Tattiana seemed.

XXXV

The chairs are thrust back with a roar,
The crowd unto the drawing-room speeds,
As bees who leave their dainty store
And seek in buzzing swarms the meads.
Contented and with victuals stored,
Neighbour by neighbour sat and snored,
Matrons unto the fireplace go,
Maids in the corner whisper low;
Behold! green tables are brought forth,
And testy gamesters do engage
In boston and the game of age,
Ombre, and whist all others worth:
A strong resemblance these possess —
All sons of mental weariness.

XXXVI

Eight rubbers were already played,
Eight times the heroes of the fight
Change of position had essayed,
When tea was brought. 'Tis my delight
Time to denote by dinner, tea,
And supper. In the country we
Can count the time without much fuss —
The stomach doth admonish us.
And, by the way, I here assert
That for that matter in my verse
As many dinners I rehearse,
As oft to meat and drink advert,
As thou, great Homer, didst of yore,
Whom thirty centuries adore.

XXXVII

I will with thy divinity
Contend with knife and fork and platter,
But grant with magnanimity
I'm beaten in another matter;
Thy heroes, sanguinary wights,
Also thy rough-and-tumble fights,
Thy Venus and thy Jupiter,
More advantageously appear
Than cold Oneguine's oddities,
The aspect of a landscape drear.
Or e'en Istomina, my dear,
And fashion's gay frivolities;
But my Tattiana, on my soul,
Is sweeter than thy Helen foul.

XXXVIII

No one the contrary will urge,
Though for his Helen Menelaus
Again a century should scourge
Us, and like Trojan warriors slay us;
Though around honoured Priam's throne
Troy's sages should in concert own
Once more, when she appeared in sight,
Paris and Menelaus right.
But as to fighting — 'twill appear!
For patience, reader, I must plead!
A little farther please to read
And be not in advance severe.

There'll be a fight. I do not lie.
My word of honour given have I.

XXXIX

The tea, as I remarked, appeared,
But scarce had maids their saucers ta'en
When in the grand saloon was heard
Of bassoons and of flutes the strain.
His soul by crash of music fired,
His tea with rum no more desired,
The Paris of those country parts
To Olga Petoushkova darts:
To Tania Lenski; Kharlikova,
A marriageable maid matured,
The poet from Tamboff secured,
Bouyanoff whisked off Poustiakova.
All to the grand saloon are gone —
The ball in all its splendour shone.

XL

I tried when I began this tale,
(See the first canto if ye will),
A ball in Peter's capital,
To sketch ye in Albano's style.(60)
But by fantastic dreams distraught,
My memory wandered wide and sought
The feet of my dear lady friends.
O feet, where'er your path extends
I long enough deceived have erred.
The perfidies I recollect
Should make me much more circumspect,
Reform me both in deed and word,
And this fifth canto ought to be
From such digressions wholly free.

[Note 60: Francesco Albano, a celebrated painter, styled the "Anacreon of Painting," was born at Bologna 1578, and died in the year 1666.]

XLI

The whirlwind of the waltz sweeps by,
Undeviating and insane
As giddy youth's hilarity —
Pair after pair the race sustain.
The moment for revenge, meanwhile,

Espying, Eugene with a smile
Approaches Olga and the pair
Amid the company career.
Soon the maid on a chair he seats,
Begins to talk of this and that,
But when two minutes she had sat,
Again the giddy waltz repeats.
All are amazed; but Lenski he
Scarce credits what his eyes can see.

XLII

Hark! the mazurka. In times past,
When the mazurka used to peal,
All rattled in the ball-room vast,
The parquet cracked beneath the heel,
And jolting jarred the window-frames.
'Tis not so now. Like gentle dames
We glide along a floor of wax.
However, the mazurka lacks
Nought of its charms original
In country towns, where still it keeps
Its stamping, capers and high leaps.
Fashion is there immutable,
Who tyrannizes us with ease,
Of modern Russians the disease.

XLIII

Bouyanoff, wrathful cousin mine,
Unto the hero of this lay
Olga and Tania led. Malign,
Oneguine Olga bore away.
Gliding in negligent career,
He bending whispered in her ear
Some madrigal not worth a rush,
And pressed her hand — the crimson blush
Upon her cheek by adulation
Grew brighter still. But Lenski hath
Seen all, beside himself with wrath,
And hot with jealous indignation,
Till the mazurka's close he stays,
Her hand for the cotillon prays.

XLIV

She fears she cannot. — Cannot? Why? —
She promised Eugene, or she would
With great delight. — O God on high!
Heard he the truth? And thus she could —
And can it be? But late a child
And now a fickle flirt and wild,
Cunning already to display
And well-instructed to betray!
Lenski the stroke could not sustain,
At womankind he growled a curse,
Departed, ordered out his horse
And galloped home. But pistols twain,
A pair of bullets — nought beside —
His fate shall presently decide.

CANTO THE SIXTH

The Duel

‘La, sotto giorni nubilosi e brevi,
Nasce una gente a cui ‘l morir non duole.’
Petrarch

Canto The Sixth

[Mikhailovskoe, 1826: the two final stanzas were, however, written at Moscow.]

I

Having remarked Vladimir’s flight,
Oneguine, bored to death again,
By Olga stood, dejected quite
And satisfied with vengeance ta’en.
Olga began to long likewise
For Lenski, sought him with her eyes,
And endless the cotillon seemed
As if some troubled dream she dreamed.
‘Tis done. To supper they proceed.
Bedding is laid out and to all
Assigned a lodging, from the hall(61)
Up to the attic, and all need
Tranquil repose. Eugene alone
To pass the night at home hath gone.

[Note 61: Hospitality is a national virtue of the Russians. On festal occasions in the country the whole party is usually accommodated for the night, or indeed for as many nights as desired, within the house of the entertainer. This of course is rendered necessary by the great distances which separate the residences of the gentry. Still, the alacrity with which a Russian hostess will turn her house topsy-turvy for the accommodation of forty or fifty guests would somewhat astonish the mistress of a modern Belgravian mansion.]

II

All slumber. In the drawing-room
Loud snores the cumbrous Poustiakoff
With better half as cumbersome;
Gvozdine, Bouyanoff, Petoushkoff
And Flianoff, somewhat indisposed,
On chairs in the saloon reposed,
Whilst on the floor Monsieur Triquet

In jersey and in nightcap lay.
In Olga's and Tattiana's rooms
Lay all the girls by sleep embraced,
Except one by the window placed
Whom pale Diana's ray illumines —
My poor Tattiana cannot sleep
But stares into the darkness deep.

III

His visit she had not awaited,
His momentary loving glance
Her inmost soul had penetrated,
And his strange conduct at the dance
With Olga; nor of this appeared
An explanation: she was scared,
Alarmed by jealous agonies:
A hand of ice appeared to seize(62)
Her heart: it seemed a darksome pit
Beneath her roaring opened wide:
"I shall expire," Tattiana cried,
"But death from him will be delight.
I murmur not! Why mournfulness?
He *cannot* give me happiness."

[Note 62: There must be a peculiar appropriateness in this expression as descriptive of the sensation of extreme cold. Mr. Wallace makes use of an identical phrase in describing an occasion when he was frostbitten whilst sledging in Russia. He says (vol. i. p. 33): "My fur cloak flew open, the cold seemed to grasp me in the region of the heart, and I fell insensible."]

IV

Haste, haste thy lagging pace, my story!
A new acquaintance we must scan.
There dwells five versts from Krasnogory,
Vladimir's property, a man
Who thrives this moment as I write,
A philosophic anchorite:
Zaretski, once a bully bold,
A gambling troop when he controlled,
Chief rascal, pot-house president,
Now of a family the head,
Simple and kindly and unwed,
True friend, landlord benevolent,
Yea! and a man of honour, lo!
How perfect doth our epoch grow!

V

Time was the flattering voice of fame,
His ruffian bravery adored,
And true, his pistol's faultless aim
An ace at fifteen paces bored.
But I must add to what I write
That, tipsy once in actual fight,
He from his Kalmuck horse did leap
In mud and mire to wallow deep,
Drunk as a fly; and thus the French
A valuable hostage gained,
A modern Regulus unchained,
Who to surrender did not blench
That every morn at Verrey's cost
Three flasks of wine he might exhaust.

VI

Time was, his raillery was gay,
He loved the simpleton to mock,
To make wise men the idiot play
Openly or 'neath decent cloak.
Yet sometimes this or that deceit
Encountered punishment complete,
And sometimes into snares as well
Himself just like a greenhorn fell.
He could in disputation shine
With pungent or obtuse retort,
At times to silence would resort,
At times talk nonsense with design;
Quarrels among young friends he bred
And to the field of honour led;

VII

Or reconciled them, it may be,
And all the three to breakfast went;
Then he'd malign them secretly
With jest and gossip gaily blent.
Sed alia tempora. And bravery
(Like love, another sort of knavery!)
Diminishes as years decline.
But, as I said, Zaretski mine
Beneath acacias, cherry-trees,
From storms protection having sought,

Lived as a really wise man ought,
Like Horace, planted cabbages,
Both ducks and geese in plenty bred
And lessons to his children read.

VIII

He was no fool, and Eugene mine,
To friendship making no pretence,
Admired his judgment, which was fine,
Pervaded with much common sense.
He usually was glad to see
The man and liked his company,
So, when he came next day to call,
Was not surprised thereby at all.
But, after mutual compliments,
Zaretski with a knowing grin,
Ere conversation could begin,
The epistle from the bard presents.
Onegine to the window went
And scanned in silence its content.

IX

It was a cheery, generous
Cartel, or challenge to a fight,
Where to in language courteous
Lenski his comrade did invite.
Onegine, by first impulse moved,
Turned and replied as it behoved,
Curtly announcing for the fray
That he was "ready any day."
Zaretski rose, nor would explain,
He cared no longer there to stay,
Had much to do at home that day,
And so departed. But Eugene,
The matter by his conscience tried,
Was with himself dissatisfied.

X

In fact, the subject analysed,
Within that secret court discussed,
In much his conduct stigmatized;
For, from the outset, 'twas unjust
To jest as he had done last eve,
A timid, shrinking love to grieve.

And ought he not to disregard
The poet's madness? for 'tis hard
At eighteen not to play the fool!
Sincerely loving him, Eugene
Assuredly should not have been
Conventionality's dull tool —
Not a mere hot, pugnacious boy,
But man of sense and probity.

XI

He might his motives have narrated,
Not bristled up like a wild beast,
He ought to have conciliated
That youthful heart — "But, now at least,
The opportunity is flown.
Besides, a duellist well-known
Hath mixed himself in the affair,
Malicious and a slanderer.
Undoubtedly, disdain alone
Should recompense his idle jeers,
But fools — their calumnies and sneers" —
Behold! the world's opinion!(63)
Our idol, Honour's motive force,
Round which revolves the universe.

[Note 63: A line of Griboyedoff's. (Woe from Wit.)]

XII

Impatient, boiling o'er with wrath,
The bard his answer waits at home,
But lo! his braggart neighbour hath
Triumphant with the answer come.
Now for the jealous youth what joy!
He feared the criminal might try
To treat the matter as a jest,
Use subterfuge, and thus his breast
From the dread pistol turn away.
But now all doubt was set aside,
Unto the windmill he must ride
To-morrow before break of day,
To cock the pistol; barrel bend
On thigh or temple, friend on friend.

XIII

Resolved the flirt to cast away,
The foaming Lenski would refuse,
To see his Olga ere the fray —
His watch, the sun in turn he views —
Finally tost his arms in air
And lo! he is already there!
He deemed his coming would inspire
Olga with trepidation dire.
He was deceived. Just as before
The miserable bard to meet,
As hope uncertain and as sweet,
Olga ran skipping from the door.
She was as heedless and as gay —
Well! just as she was yesterday.

XIV

“Why did you leave last night so soon?”
Was the first question Olga made,
Lenski, into confusion thrown,
All silently hung down his head.
Jealousy and vexation took
To flight before her radiant look,
Before such fond simplicity
And mental elasticity.
He eyed her with a fond concern,
Perceived that he was still beloved,
Already by repentance moved
To ask forgiveness seemed to yearn;
But trembles, words he cannot find,
Delighted, almost sane in mind.

XV

But once more pensive and distressed
Beside his Olga doth he grieve,
Nor enough strength of mind possessed
To mention the foregoing eve,
He mused: “I will her saviour be!
With ardent sighs and flattery
The vile seducer shall not dare
The freshness of her heart impair,
Nor shall the caterpillar come
The lily’s stem to eat away,
Nor shall the bud of yesterday
Perish when half disclosed its bloom!” —

All this, my friends, translate aright:
"I with my friend intend to fight!"

XVI

If he had only known the wound
Which rankled in Tattiana's breast,
And if Tattiana mine had found —
If the poor maiden could have guessed
That the two friends with morning's light
Above the yawning grave would fight, —
Ah! it may be, affection true
Had reconciled the pair anew!
But of this love, e'en casually,
As yet none had discovered aught;
Eugene of course related nought,
Tattiana suffered secretly;
Her nurse, who could have made a guess,
Was famous for thick-headedness.

XVII

Lenski that eve in thought immersed,
Now gloomy seemed and cheerful now,
But he who by the Muse was nursed
Is ever thus. With frowning brow
To the pianoforte he moves
And various chords upon it proves,
Then, eyeing Olga, whispers low:
"I'm happy, say, is it not so?" —
But it grew late; he must not stay;
Heavy his heart with anguish grew;
To the young girl he said adieu,
As it were, tore himself away.
Gazing into his face, she said:
"What ails thee?" — "Nothing." — He is fled.

XVIII

At home arriving he addressed
His care unto his pistols' plight,
Replaced them in their box, undressed
And Schiller read by candlelight.
But one thought only filled his mind,
His mournful heart no peace could find,
Olga he sees before his eyes
Miraculously fair arise,

Vladimir closes up his book,
And grasps a pen: his verse, albeit
With lovers' rubbish filled, was neat
And flowed harmoniously. He took
And spouted it with lyric fire —
Like D[elvig] when dinner doth inspire.

XIX

Destiny hath preserved his lay.
I have it. Lo! the very thing!
“Oh! whither have ye winged your way,
Ye golden days of my young spring?
What will the coming dawn reveal?
In vain my anxious eyes appeal;
In mist profound all yet is hid.
So be it! Just the laws which bid
The fatal bullet penetrate,
Or innocently past me fly.
Good governs all! The hour draws nigh
Of life or death predestinate.
Blest be the labours of the light,
And blest the shadows of the night.

XX

“To-morrow's dawn will glimmer gray,
Bright day will then begin to burn,
But the dark sepulchre I may
Have entered never to return.
The memory of the bard, a dream,
Will be absorbed by Lethe's stream;
Men will forget me, but my urn
To visit, lovely maid, return,
O'er my remains to drop a tear,
And think: here lies who loved me well,
For consecrate to me he fell
In the dawn of existence drear.
Maid whom my heart desires alone,
Approach, approach; I am thine own.”

XXI

Thus in a style *obscure* and *stale*, (64)
He wrote ('tis the romantic style,
Though of romance therein I fail
To see aught — never mind meanwhile)

And about dawn upon his breast
His weary head declined at rest,
For o'er a word to fashion known,
"Ideal," he had drowsy grown.
But scarce had sleep's soft witchery
Subdued him, when his neighbour stept
Into the chamber where he slept
And wakened him with the loud cry:
"'Tis time to get up! Seven doth strike.
Oneguine waits on us, 'tis like."

[Note 64: The fact of the above words being italicised suggests the idea that the poet is here firing a Parthian shot at some unfriendly critic.]

XXII

He was in error; for Eugene
Was sleeping then a sleep like death;
The pall of night was growing thin,
To Lucifer the cock must breathe
His song, when still he slumbered deep,
The sun had mounted high his steep,
A passing snowstorm wreathed away
With pallid light, but Eugene lay
Upon his couch insensibly;
Slumber still o'er him lingering flies.
But finally he oped his eyes
And turned aside the drapery;
He gazed upon the clock which showed
He long should have been on the road.

XXIII

He rings in haste; in haste arrives
His Frenchman, good Monsieur Guillot,
Who dressing-gown and slippers gives
And linen on him doth bestow.
Dressing as quickly as he can,
Eugene directs the trusty man
To accompany him and to escort
A box of terrible import.
Harnessed the rapid sledge arrived:
He enters: to the mill he drives:
Descends, the order Guillot gives,
The fatal tubes Lepage contrived(65)
To bring behind: the triple steeds
To two young oaks the coachman leads.

[Note 65: Lepage — a celebrated gunmaker of former days.]

XXIV

Lenski the foeman's apparition
Leaning against the dam expects,
Zaretski, village mechanician,
In the meantime the mill inspects.
Oneguine his excuses says;
"But," cried Zaretski in amaze,
"Your second you have left behind!"
A duellist of classic mind,
Method was dear unto his heart
He would not that a man ye slay
In a lax or informal way,
But followed the strict rules of art,
And ancient usages observed
(For which our praise he hath deserved).

XXV

"My second!" cried in turn Eugene,
"Behold my friend Monsieur Guillot;
To this arrangement can be seen,
No obstacle of which I know.
Although unknown to fame mayhap,
He's a straightforward little chap."
Zaretski bit his lip in wrath,
But to Vladimir Eugene saith:
"Shall we commence?" — "Let it be so,"
Lenski replied, and soon they be
Behind the mill. Meantime ye see
Zaretski and Monsieur Guillot
In consultation stand aside —
The foes with downcast eyes abide.

XXVI

Foes! Is it long since friendship rent
Asunder was and hate prepared?
Since leisure was together spent,
Meals, secrets, occupations shared?
Now, like hereditary foes,
Malignant fury they disclose,
As in some frenzied dream of fear
These friends cold-bloodedly draw near

Mutual destruction to contrive.
Cannot they amicably smile
Ere crimson stains their hands defile,
Depart in peace and friendly live?
But fashionable hatred's flame
Trembles at artificial shame.

XXVII

The shining pistols are uncased,
The mallet loud the ramrod strikes,
Bullets are down the barrels pressed,
For the first time the hammer clicks.
Lo! poured in a thin gray cascade,
The powder in the pan is laid,
The sharp flint, screwed securely on,
Is cocked once more. Uneasy grown,
Guillot behind a pollard stood;
Aside the foes their mantles threw,
Zaretski paces thirty-two
Measured with great exactitude.
At each extreme one takes his stand,
A loaded pistol in his hand.

XXVIII

“Advance!” —
Indifferent and sedate,
The foes, as yet not taking aim,
With measured step and even gait
Athwart the snow four paces came —
Four deadly paces do they span;
Oneguine slowly then began
To raise his pistol to his eye,
Though he advanced unceasingly.
And lo! five paces more they pass,
And Lenski, closing his left eye,
Took aim — but as immediately
Oneguine fired — Alas! alas!
The poet's hour hath sounded — See!
He drops his pistol silently.

XXIX

He on his bosom gently placed
His hand, and fell. His clouded eye
Not agony, but death expressed.

So from the mountain lazily
The avalanche of snow first bends,
Then glittering in the sun descends.
The cold sweat bursting from his brow,
To the youth Eugene hurried now —
Gazed on him, called him. Useless care!
He was no more! The youthful bard
For evermore had disappeared.
The storm was hushed. The blossom fair
Was withered ere the morning light —
The altar flame was quenched in night.

XXX

Tranquil he lay, and strange to view
The peace which on his forehead beamed,
His breast was riddled through and through,
The blood gushed from the wound and steamed
Ere this but one brief moment beat
That heart with inspiration sweet
And enmity and hope and love —
The blood boiled and the passions strove.
Now, as in a deserted house,
All dark and silent hath become;
The inmate is for ever dumb,
The windows whitened, shutters close —
Whither departed is the host?
God knows! The very trace is lost.

XXXI

‘Tis sweet the foe to aggravate
With epigrams impertinent,
Sweet to behold him obstinate,
His butting horns in anger bent,
The glass unwittingly inspect
And blush to own himself reflect.
Sweeter it is, my friends, if he
Howl like a dolt: ‘tis meant for me!
But sweeter still it is to arrange
For him an honourable grave,
At his pale brow a shot to have,
Placed at the customary range;
But home his body to despatch
Can scarce in sweetness be a match.

XXXII

Well, if your pistol ball by chance
The comrade of your youth should strike,
Who by a haughty word or glance
Or any trifle else ye like
You o'er your wine insulted hath —
Or even overcome by wrath
Scornfully challenged you afield —
Tell me, of sentiments concealed
Which in your spirit dominates,
When motionless your gaze beneath
He lies, upon his forehead death,
And slowly life coagulates —
When deaf and silent he doth lie
Heedless of your despairing cry?

XXXIII

Eugene, his pistol yet in hand
And with remorseful anguish filled,
Gazing on Lenski's corse did stand —
Zaretski shouted: "Why, he's killed!" —
Killed! at this dreadful exclamation
Oneguine went with trepidation
And the attendants called in haste.
Most carefully Zaretski placed
Within his sledge the stiffened corse,
And hurried home his awful freight.
Conscious of death approximate,
Loud paws the earth each panting horse,
His bit with foam besprinkled o'er,
And homeward like an arrow tore.

XXXIV

My friends, the poet ye regret!
When hope's delightful flower but bloomed
In bud of promise incomplete,
The manly toga scarce assumed,
He perished. Where his troubled dreams,
And where the admirable streams
Of youthful impulse, reverie,
Tender and elevated, free?
And where tempestuous love's desires,
The thirst of knowledge and of fame,
Horror of sinfulness and shame,
Imagination's sacred fires,

Ye shadows of a life more high,
Ye dreams of heavenly poesy?

XXXV

Perchance to benefit mankind,
Or but for fame he saw the light;
His lyre, to silence now consigned,
Resounding through all ages might
Have echoed to eternity.
With worldly honours, it may be,
Fortune the poet had repaid.
It may be that his martyred shade
Carried a truth divine away;
That, for the century designed,
Had perished a creative mind,
And past the threshold of decay,
He ne'er shall hear Time's eulogy,
The blessings of humanity.

XXXVI

Or, it may be, the bard had passed
A life in common with the rest;
Vanished his youthful years at last,
The fire extinguished in his breast,
In many things had changed his life —
The Muse abandoned, ta'en a wife,
Inhabited the country, clad
In dressing-gown, a cuckold glad:
A life of fact, not fiction, led —
At forty suffered from the gout,
Eaten, drunk, gossiped and grown stout:
And finally, upon his bed
Had finished life amid his sons,
Doctors and women, sobs and groans.

XXXVII

But, howsoe'er his lot were cast,
Alas! the youthful lover slain,
Poetical enthusiast,
A friendly hand thy life hath ta'en!
There is a spot the village near
Where dwelt the Muses' worshipper,
Two pines have joined their tangled roots,
A rivulet beneath them shoots

Its waters to the neighbouring vale.
There the tired ploughman loves to lie,
The reaping girls approach and ply
Within its wave the sounding pail,
And by that shady rivulet
A simple tombstone hath been set.

XXXVIII

There, when the rains of spring we mark
Upon the meadows showering,
The shepherd plaits his shoe of bark,(66)
Of Volga fishermen doth sing,
And the young damsel from the town,
For summer to the country flown,
Whene'er across the plain at speed
Alone she gallops on her steed,
Stops at the tomb in passing by;
The tightened leathern rein she draws,
Aside she casts her veil of gauze
And reads with rapid eager eye
The simple epitaph — a tear
Doth in her gentle eye appear.

[Note 66: In Russia and other northern countries rude shoes are made of the inner bark of the lime tree.]

XXXIX

And meditative from the spot
She leisurely away doth ride,
Spite of herself with Lenski's lot
Longtime her mind is occupied.
She muses: "What was Olga's fate?
Longtime was her heart desolate
Or did her tears soon cease to flow?
And where may be her sister now?
Where is the outlaw, banned by men,
Of fashionable dames the foe,
The misanthrope of gloomy brow,
By whom the youthful bard was slain?" —
In time I'll give ye without fail
A true account and in detail.

XL

But not at present, though sincerely
I on my chosen hero dote;
Though I'll return to him right early,
Just at this moment I cannot.
Years have inclined me to stern prose,
Years to light rhyme themselves oppose,
And now, I mournfully confess,
In rhyming I show laziness.
As once, to fill the rapid page
My pen no longer finds delight,
Other and colder thoughts affright,
Stern solicitudes engage,
In worldly din or solitude
Upon my visions such intrude.

XXI

Fresh aspirations I have known,
I am acquainted with fresh care,
Hopeless are all the first, I own,
Yet still remains the old despair.
Illusions, dream, where, where your sweetness?
Where youth (the proper rhyme is fleetness)?
And is it true her garland bright
At last is shrunk and withered quite?
And is it true and not a jest,
Not even a poetic phrase,
That vanished are my youthful days
(This joking I used to protest),
Never for me to reappear —
That soon I reach my thirtieth year?

XXII

And so my noon hath come! If so,
I must resign myself, in sooth;
Yet let us part in friendship, O
My frivolous and jolly youth.
I thank thee for thy joyfulness,
Love's tender transports and distress,
For riot, frolics, mighty feeds,
And all that from thy hand proceeds —
I thank thee. In thy company,
With tumult or contentment still
Of thy delights I drank my fill,
Enough! with tranquil spirit I

Commence a new career in life
And rest from bygone days of strife.

XLIII

But pause! Thou calm retreats, farewell,
Where my days in the wilderness
Of languor and of love did tell
And contemplative dreaminess;
And thou, youth's early inspiration,
Invigorate imagination
And spur my spirit's torpid mood!
Fly frequent to my solitude,
Let not the poet's spirit freeze,
Grow harsh and cruel, dead and dry,
Eventually petrify
In the world's mortal revelries,
Amid the soulless sons of pride
And glittering simpletons beside;

XLIV

Amid sly, pusillanimous
Spoiled children most degenerate
And tiresome rogues ridiculous
And stupid censors passionate;
Amid coquettes who pray to God
And abject slaves who kiss the rod;
In haunts of fashion where each day
All with urbanity betray,
Where harsh frivolity proclaims
Its cold unfeeling sentences;
Amid the awful emptiness
Of conversation, thought and aims —
In that morass where you and I
Wallow, my friends, in company!

CANTO THE SEVENTH

Moscow

Moscow, Russia's darling daughter,
Where thine equal shall we find?'
Dmitrieff

Who can help loving mother Moscow?
Baratynski (Feasts)

A journey to Moscow! To see the world!
Where better?
Where man is not.
Griboyedoff (Woe from Wit)

Canto The Seventh

[Written 1827-1828 at Moscow, Mikhailovskoe, Saint Petersburg and Malinniki.]

I

Impelled by Spring's dissolving beams,
The snows from off the hills around
Descended swift in turbid streams
And flooded all the level ground.
A smile from slumbering nature clear
Did seem to greet the youthful year;
The heavens shone in deeper blue,
The woods, still naked to the view,
Seemed in a haze of green embowered.
The bee forth from his cell of wax
Flew to collect his rural tax;
The valleys dried and gaily flowered;
Herds low, and under night's dark veil
Already sings the nightingale.

II

Mournful is thine approach to me,
O Spring, thou chosen time of love!
What agitation languidly
My spirit and my blood doth move,
What sad emotions o'er me steal
When first upon my cheek I feel

The breath of Spring again renewed,
Secure in rural quietude —
Or, strange to me is happiness?
Do all things which to mirth incline.
And make a dark existence shine
Inflict annoyance and distress
Upon a soul inert and cloyed? —
And is all light within destroyed?

III

Or, heedless of the leaves' return
Which Autumn late to earth consigned,
Do we alone our losses mourn
Of which the rustling woods remind?
Or, when anew all Nature teems,
Do we foresee in troubled dreams
The coming of life's Autumn drear.
For which no springtime shall appear?
Or, it may be, we inly seek,
Wafted upon poetic wing,
Some other long-departed Spring,
Whose memories make the heart beat quick
With thoughts of a far distant land,
Of a strange night when the moon and —

IV

'Tis now the season! Idlers all,
Epicurean philosophers,
Ye men of fashion cynical,
Of Levshin's school ye followers,(67)
Priams of country populations
And dames of fine organisations,
Spring summons you to her green bowers,
'Tis the warm time of labour, flowers;
The time for mystic strolls which late
Into the starry night extend.
Quick to the country let us wend
In vehicles surcharged with freight;
In coach or post-cart duly placed
Beyond the city-barriers haste.

[Note 67: Levshin — a contemporary writer on political economy.]

V

Thou also, reader generous,
The chaise long ordered please employ,
Abandon cities riotous,
Which in the winter were a joy:
The Muse capricious let us coax,
Go hear the rustling of the oaks
Beside a nameless rivulet,
Where in the country Eugene yet,
An idle anchorite and sad,
A while ago the winter spent,
Near young Tattiana resident,
My pretty self-deceiving maid —
No more the village knows his face,
For there he left a mournful trace.

VI

Let us proceed unto a rill,
Which in a hilly neighbourhood
Seeks, winding amid meadows still,
The river through the linden wood.
The nightingale there all night long,
Spring's paramour, pours forth her song
The fountain brawls, sweetbriers bloom,
And lo! where lies a marble tomb
And two old pines their branches spread —
*"Vladimir Lenski lies beneath,
Who early died a gallant death,"*
Thereon the passing traveller read:
*"The date, his fleeting years how long —
Repose in peace, thou child of song."*

VII

Time was, the breath of early dawn
Would agitate a mystic wreath
Hung on a pine branch earthward drawn
Above the humble urn of death.
Time was, two maidens from their home
At eventide would hither come,
And, by the light the moonbeams gave,
Lament, embrace upon that grave.
But now — none heeds the monument
Of woe: effaced the pathway now:
There is no wreath upon the bough:
Alone beside it, gray and bent,

As formerly the shepherd sits
And his poor basten sandal knits.

VIII

My poor Vladimir, bitter tears
Thee but a little space bewept,
Faithless, alas! thy maid appears,
Nor true unto her sorrow kept.
Another could her heart engage,
Another could her woe assuage
By flattery and lover's art —
A lancer captivates her heart!
A lancer her soul dotes upon:
Before the altar, lo! the pair,
Mark ye with what a modest air
She bows her head beneath the crown;(68)
Behold her downcast eyes which glow,
Her lips where light smiles come and go!

[Note 68: The crown used in celebrating marriages in Russia according to the forms of the Eastern Church. See Note 28.]

IX

My poor Vladimir! In the tomb,
Passed into dull eternity,
Was the sad poet filled with gloom,
Hearing the fatal perfidy?
Or, beyond Lethe lulled to rest,
Hath the bard, by indifference blest,
Callous to all on earth become —
Is the world to him sealed and dumb?
The same unmoved oblivion
On us beyond the grave attends,
The voice of lovers, foes and friends,
Dies suddenly: of heirs alone
Remains on earth the unseemly rage,
Whilst struggling for the heritage.

X

Soon Olga's accents shrill resound
No longer through her former home;
The lancer, to his calling bound,
Back to his regiment must roam.
The aged mother, bathed in tears,

Distracted by her grief appears
When the hour came to bid good-bye —
But my Tattiana's eyes were dry.
Only her countenance assumed
A deadly pallor, air distressed;
When all around the entrance pressed,
To say farewell, and fussed and fumed
Around the carriage of the pair —
Tattiana gently led them there.

XI

And long her eyes as through a haze
After the wedded couple strain;
Alas! the friend of childish days
Away, Tattiana, hath been ta'en.
Thy dove, thy darling little pet
On whom a sister's heart was set
Afar is borne by cruel fate,
For evermore is separate.
She wanders aimless as a sprite,
Into the tangled garden goes
But nowhere can she find repose,
Nor even tears afford respite,
Of consolation all bereft —
Well nigh her heart in twain was cleft.

XII

In cruel solitude each day
With flame more ardent passion burns,
And to Oneguine far away
Her heart importunately turns.
She never more his face may view,
For was it not her duty to
Detest him for a brother slain?
The poet fell; already men
No more remembered him; unto
Another his betrothed was given;
The memory of the bard was driven
Like smoke athwart the heaven blue;
Two hearts perchance were desolate
And mourned him still. Why mourn his fate?

XIII

'Twas eve. 'Twas dusk. The river speeds
In tranquil flow. The beetle hums.
Already dance to song proceeds;
The fisher's fire afar illumines
The river's bank. Tattiana lone
Beneath the silver of the moon
Long time in meditation deep
Her path across the plain doth keep —
Proceeds, until she from a hill
Sees where a noble mansion stood,
A village and beneath, a wood,
A garden by a shining rill.
She gazed thereon, and instant beat
Her heart more loudly and more fleet.

XIV

She hesitates, in doubt is thrown —
“Shall I proceed, or homeward flee?
He is not there: I am not known:
The house and garden I would see.”
Tattiana from the hill descends
With bated breath, around she bends
A countenance perplexed and scared.
She enters a deserted yard —
Yelping, a pack of dogs rush out,
But at her shriek ran forth with noise
The household troop of little boys,
Who with a scuffle and a shout
The curs away to kennel chase,
The damsel under escort place.

XV

“Can I inspect the mansion, please?”
Tattiana asks, and hurriedly
Unto Anicia for the keys
The family of children hie.
Anicia soon appears, the door
Opens unto her visitor.
Into the lonely house she went,
Wherein a space Oneguine spent.
She gazed — a cue, forgotten long,
Doth on the billiard table rest,
Upon the tumbled sofa placed,
A riding whip. She strolls along.

The beldam saith: "The hearth, by it
The master always used to sit.

XVI

"Departed Lenski here to dine
In winter time would often come.
Please follow this way, lady mine,
This is my master's sitting-room.
'Tis here he slept, his coffee took,
Into accounts would sometimes look,
A book at early morn perused.
The room my former master used.
On Sundays by yon window he,
Spectacles upon nose, all day
Was wont with me at cards to play.
God save his soul eternally
And grant his weary bones their rest
Deep in our mother Earth's chill breast!"

XVII

Tattiana's eyes with tender gleam
On everything around her gaze,
Of priceless value all things seem
And in her languid bosom raise
A pleasure though with sorrow knit:
The table with its lamp unlit,
The pile of books, with carpet spread
Beneath the window-sill his bed,
The landscape which the moonbeams fret,
The twilight pale which softens all,
Lord Byron's portrait on the wall
And the cast-iron statuette
With folded arms and eyes bent low,
Cocked hat and melancholy brow.(69)

[Note 69: The Russians not unfrequently adorn their apartments with effigies of the great Napoleon.]

XVIII

Long in this fashionable cell
Tattiana as enchanted stood;
But it grew late; cold blew the gale;
Dark was the valley and the wood
slept o'er the river misty grown.
Behind the mountain sank the moon.

Long, long the hour had past when home
Our youthful wanderer should roam.
She hid the trouble of her breast,
Heaved an involuntary sigh
And turned to leave immediately,
But first permission did request
Thither in future to proceed
That certain volumes she might read.

XIX

Adieu she to the matron said
At the front gates, but in brief space
At early morn returns the maid
To the abandoned dwelling-place.
When in the study's calm retreat,
Wrapt in oblivion complete,
She found herself alone at last,
Longtime her tears flowed thick and fast;
But presently she tried to read;
At first for books was disinclined,
But soon their choice seemed to her mind
Remarkable. She then indeed
Devoured them with an eager zest.
A new world was made manifest!

XX

Although we know that Eugene had
Long ceased to be a reading man,
Still certain authors, I may add,
He had excepted from the ban:
The bard of Juan and the Giaour,
With it may be a couple more;
Romances three, in which ye scan
Portrayed contemporary man
As the reflection of his age,
His immorality of mind
To arid selfishness resigned,
A visionary personage
With his exasperated sense,
His energy and impotence.

XXI

And numerous pages had preserved
The sharp incisions of his nail,

And these the attentive maid observed
With eye precise and without fail.
Tattiana saw with trepidation
By what idea or observation
Oneguine was the most impressed,
In what he merely acquiesced.
Upon those margins she perceived
Oneguine's pencillings. His mind
Made revelations undesigned,
Of what he thought and what believed,
A dagger, asterisk, or note
Interrogation to denote.

XXII

And my Tattiana now began
To understand by slow degrees
More clearly, God be praised, the man,
Whom autocratic fate's decrees
Had bid her sigh for without hope —
A dangerous, gloomy misanthrope,
Being from hell or heaven sent,
Angel or fiend malevolent.
Which is he? or an imitation,
A bogy conjured up in joke,
A Russian in Childe Harold's cloak,
Of foreign whims the impersonation —
Handbook of fashionable phrase
Or parody of modern ways?

XXIII

Hath she found out the riddle yet?
Hath she a fitting phrase selected?
But time flies and she doth forget
They long at home have her expected —
Whither two neighbouring dames have walked
And a long time about her talked.
“What can be done? She is no child!”
Cried the old dame with anguish filled:
“Olinka is her junior, see.
‘Tis time to marry her, ‘tis true,
But tell me what am I to do?
To all she answers cruelly —
I will not wed, and ever weeps
And lonely through the forest creeps.”

XXIV

“Is she in love?” quoth one. “With whom?
Bouyanoff courted. She refused.
Petoushkoff met the selfsame doom.
The hussar Pikhtin was accused.
How the young imp on Tania doted!
To captivate her how devoted!
I mused: perhaps the matter’s squared —
O yes! my hopes soon disappeared.”
“But, *matushka*, to Moscow you(70)
Should go, the market for a maid,
With many a vacancy, ‘tis said.” —
“Alas! my friend, no revenue!”
“Enough to see one winter’s end;
If not, the money I will lend.”

[Note 70: “Matushka,” or “little mother,” a term of endearment in constant use amongst Russian females.]

XXV

The venerable dame opined
The counsel good and full of reason,
Her money counted, and designed
To visit Moscow in the season.
Tattiana learns the intelligence —
Of her provincial innocence
The unaffected traits she now
Unto a carping world must show —
Her toilette’s antiquated style,
Her antiquated mode of speech,
For Moscow fops and Circes each
To mark with a contemptuous smile.
Horror! had she not better stay
Deep in the greenwood far away?

XXVI

Arising with the morning’s light,
Unto the fields she makes her way,
And with emotional delight
Surveying them, she thus doth say:
“Ye peaceful valleys all, good-bye!
Ye well-known mountain summits high,
Ye groves whose depths I know so well,

Thou beauteous sky above, farewell!
Delicious nature, thee I fly,
The calm existence which I prize
I yield for splendid vanities,
Thou too farewell, my liberty!
Whither and wherefore do I speed
And what will Destiny concede?"

XXVII

Farther Tattiana's walks extend —
'Tis now the hillock now the rill
Their natural attractions lend
To stay the maid against her will.
She the acquaintances she loves,
Her spacious fields and shady groves,
Another visit hastes to pay.
But Summer swiftly fades away
And golden Autumn draweth nigh,
And pallid nature trembling grieves,
A victim decked with golden leaves;
Dark clouds before the north wind fly;
It blew: it howled: till winter e'en
Came forth in all her magic sheen.

XXVIII

The snow descends and buries all,
Hangs heavy on the oaken boughs,
A white and undulating pall
O'er hillock and o'er meadow throws.
The channel of the river stilled
As if with eider-down is filled.
The hoar-frost glitters: all rejoice
In mother Winter's strange caprice.
But Tania's heart is not at ease,
Winter's approach she doth not hail
Nor the frost particles inhale
Nor the first snow of winter seize
Her shoulders, breast and face to lave —
Alarm the winter journey gave.

XXIX

The date was fixed though oft postponed,
But ultimately doth approach.
Examined, mended, newly found

Was the old and forgotten coach;
Kibitkas three, the accustomed train,(71)
The household property contain:
Saucepans and mattresses and chairs,
Portmanteaus and preserves in jars,
Feather-beds, also poultry-coops,
Basins and jugs — well! everything
To happiness contributing.
Behold! beside their dwelling groups
Of serfs the farewell wail have given.
Nags eighteen to the door are driven.

[Note 71: In former times, and to some extent the practice still continues to the present day, Russian families were wont to travel with every necessary of life, and, in the case of the wealthy, all its luxuries following in their train. As the poet complains in a subsequent stanza there were no inns; and if the simple Larinas required such ample store of creature comforts the impediments accompanying a great noble on his journeys may be easily conceived.]

XXX

These to the coach of state are bound,
Breakfast the busy cooks prepare,
Baggage is heaped up in a mound,
Old women at the coachmen swear.
A bearded postillion astride
A lean and shaggy nag doth ride,
Unto the gates the servants fly
To bid the gentlefolk good-bye.
These take their seats; the coach of state
Leisurely through the gateway glides.
“Adieu! thou home where peace abides,
Where turmoil cannot penetrate,
Shall I behold thee once again?” —
Tattiana tears cannot restrain.

XXXI

The limits of enlightenment
When to enlarge we shall succeed,
In course of time (the whole extent
Will not five centuries exceed
By computation) it is like
Our roads transformed the eye will strike;
Highways all Russia will unite
And form a network left and right;
On iron bridges we shall gaze
Which o’er the waters boldly leap,

Mountains we'll level and through deep
Streams excavate subaqueous ways,
And Christian folk will, I expect,
An inn at every stage erect.

XXXII

But now, what wretched roads one sees,
Our bridges long neglected rot,
And at the stages bugs and fleas
One moment's slumber suffer not.
Inns there are none. Pretentious but
Meagre, within a draughty hut,
A bill of fare hangs full in sight
And irritates the appetite.
Meantime a Cyclops of those parts
Before a fire which feebly glows
Mends with the Russian hammer's blows
The flimsy wares of Western marts,
With blessings on the ditches and
The ruts of his own fatherland.

XXXIII

Yet on a frosty winter day
The journey in a sledge doth please,
No senseless fashionable lay
Glides with a more luxurious ease;
For our Automedons are fire
And our swift troikas never tire;
The verst posts catch the vacant eye
And like a palisade flit by.⁽⁷²⁾
The Larinas unwisely went,
From apprehension of the cost,
By their own horses, not the post —
So Tania to her heart's content
Could taste the pleasures of the road.
Seven days and nights the travellers plod.

[Note 72: This somewhat musty joke has appeared in more than one national costume. Most Englishmen, if we were to replace verst-posts with milestones and substitute a graveyard for a palisade, would instantly recognize its Yankee extraction. In Russia however its origin is as ancient at least as the reign of Catherine the Second. The witticism ran thus: A courier sent by Prince Potemkin to the Empress drove so fast that his sword, projecting from the vehicle, rattled against the verst-posts as if against a palisade!]

XXXIV

But they draw near. Before them, lo!
White Moscow raises her old spires,
Whose countless golden crosses glow
As with innumerable fires.(73)
Ah! brethren, what was my delight
When I yon semicircle bright
Of churches, gardens, belfries high
Descried before me suddenly!
Moscow, how oft in evil days,
Condemned to exile dire by fate,
On thee I used to meditate!
Moscow! How much is in the phrase
For every loyal Russian breast!
How much is in that word expressed!

[Note 73: The aspect of Moscow, especially as seen from the Sparrow Hills, a low range bordering the river Moskva at a short distance from the city, is unique and splendid. It possesses several domes completely plated with gold and some twelve hundred spires most of which are surmounted by a golden cross. At the time of sunset they seem literally tipped with flame. It was from this memorable spot that Napoleon and the Grand Army first obtained a glimpse at the city of the Tsars. There are three hundred and seventy churches in Moscow. The Kremlin itself is however by far the most interesting object to the stranger.]

XXXV

Lo! compassed by his grove of oaks,
Petrovski Palace! Gloomily
His recent glory he invokes.
Here, drunk with his late victory,
Napoleon tarried till it please
Moscow approach on bended knees,
Time-honoured Kremlin's keys present.
Not so! My Moscow never went
To seek him out with bended head.
No gift she bears, no feast proclaims,
But lights incendiary flames
For the impatient chief instead.
From hence engrossed in thought profound
He on the conflagration frowned.(74)

[Note 74: Napoleon on his arrival in Moscow on the 14th September took up his quarters in the Kremlin, but on the 16th had to remove to the Petrovski Palace or Castle on account of the conflagration which broke out in all quarters of the city. He however returned to the Kremlin on the 19th September. The Palace itself is placed in the midst of extensive grounds just outside the city, on the road to Tver, i.e. to the northwest. It is perhaps worthy of remark, as one amongst numerous circumstances proving how extensively the poet interwove his own life-experiences with the plot of

this poem, that it was by this road that he himself must have been in the habit of approaching Moscow from his favourite country residence of Mikhailovskoe, in the province of Pskoff.]

XXXVI

Adieu, thou witness of our glory,
Petrovski Palace; come, astir!
Drive on! the city barriers hoary
Appear; along the road of Tver
The coach is borne o'er ruts and holes,
Past women, sentry-boxes, rolls,
Past palaces and nunneries,
Lamp-posts, shops, sledges, families,
Bokharians, peasants, beds of greens,
Boulevards, belfries, milliners,
Huts, chemists, Cossacks, shopkeepers
And fashionable magazines,
Balconies, lion's heads on doors,
Jackdaws on every spire — in scores.(75)

[Note 75: The first line refers to the prevailing shape of the cast-iron handles which adorn the porte cocheres. The Russians are fond of tame birds — jackdaws, pigeons, starlings, etc., abound in Moscow and elsewhere.]

XXXVII

The weary way still incomplete,
An hour passed by — another — till,
Near Khariton's in a side street
The coach before a house stood still.
At an old aunt's they had arrived
Who had for four long years survived
An invalid from lung complaint.
A Kalmuck gray, in caftan rent
And spectacles, his knitting staid
And the saloon threw open wide;
The princess from the sofa cried
And the newcomers welcome bade.
The two old ladies then embraced
And exclamations interlaced.

XXXVIII

"Princesse, mon ange!" — "Pachette!" —
"Aline!"
"Who would have thought it? As of yore!
Is it for long?" — "Ma chere cousine!"

“Sit down. How funny, to be sure!
‘Tis a scene of romance, I vow!”
“Tania, my eldest child, you know” —
“Ah! come, Tattiana, come to me!
Is it a dream, and can it be?
Cousin, rememb’rest Grandison?”
“What! Grandison?” — “Yes, certainly!”
“Oh! I remember, where is he?” —
“Here, he resides with Simeon.
He called upon me Christmas Eve —
His son is married, just conceive!”

XXXIX

“And he — but of him presently —
To-morrow Tania we will show,
What say you? to the family —
Alas! abroad I cannot go.
See, I can hardly crawl about —
But you must both be quite tired out!
Let us go seek a little rest —
Ah! I’m so weak — my throbbing breast!
Oppressive now is happiness,
Not only sorrow — Ah! my dear,
Now I am fit for nothing here.
In old age life is weariness!”
Then weeping she sank back distressed
And fits of coughing racked her chest.

XL

By the sick lady’s gaiety
And kindness Tania was impressed,
But, her own room in memory,
The strange apartment her oppressed:
Repose her silken curtains fled,
She could not sleep in her new bed.
The early tinkling of the bells
Which of approaching labour tells
Aroused Tattiana from her bed.
The maiden at her casement sits
As daylight glimmers, darkness flits,
But ah! discerns nor wood nor mead —
Beneath her lay a strange courtyard,
A stable, kitchen, fence appeared.

XLI

To consanguineous dinners they
Conduct Tattiana constantly,
That grandmothers and grandsires may
Contemplate her sad reverie.
We Russians, friends from distant parts
Ever receive with kindly hearts
And exclamations and good cheer.
“How Tania grows! Doth it appear”
“Long since I held thee at the font —
Since in these arms I thee did bear —
And since I pulled thee by the ear —
And I to give thee cakes was wont?” —
Then the old dames in chorus sing,
“Oh! how our years are vanishing!”

XLII

But nothing changed in them is seen,
All in the good old style appears,
Our dear old aunt, Princess Helene,
Her cap of tulle still ever wears:
Luceria Lvovna paint applies,
Amy Petrovna utters lies,
Ivan Petrovitch still a gaby,
Simeon Petrovitch just as shabby;
Pelagie Nikolavna has
Her friend Monsieur Finemouche the same,
Her wolf-dog and her husband tame;
Still of his club he member was —
As deaf and silly doth remain,
Still eats and drinks enough for twain.

XLIII

Their daughters kiss Tattiana fair.
In the beginning, cold and mute,
Moscow's young Graces at her stare,
Examine her from head to foot.
They deem her somewhat finical,
Outlandish and provincial,
A trifle pale, a trifle lean,
But plainer girls they oft had seen.
Obedient then to Nature's law,
With her they did associate,
Squeeze tiny hands and osculate;
Her tresses curled in fashion saw,

And oft in whispers would impart
A maiden's secrets — of the heart.

XLIV

Triumphs — their own or those of friends —
Hopes, frolics, dreams and sentiment
Their harmless conversation blends
With scandal's trivial ornament.
Then to reward such confidence
Her amorous experience
With mute appeal to ask they seem —
But Tania just as in a dream
Without participation hears,
Their voices nought to her impart
And the lone secret of her heart,
Her sacred hoard of joy and tears,
She buries deep within her breast
Nor aught confides unto the rest.

XLV

Tattiana would have gladly heard
The converse of the world polite,
But in the drawing-room all appeared
To find in gossip such delight,
Speech was so tame and colourless
Their slander e'en was weariness;
In their sterility of prattle,
Questions and news and tittle-tattle,
No sense was ever manifest
Though by an error and unsought —
The languid mind could smile at nought,
Heart would not throb albeit in jest —
Even amusing fools we miss
In thee, thou world of empty bliss.

XLVI

In groups, official striplings glance
Conceitedly on Tania fair,
And views amongst themselves advance
Unfavourable unto her.
But one buffoon unhappy deemed
Her the ideal which he dreamed,
And leaning 'gainst the portal closed
To her an elegy composed.

Also one Viazemski, remarking
Tattiana by a poor aunt's side,
Successfully to please her tried,
And an old gent the poet marking
By Tania, smoothing his peruke,
To ask her name the trouble took.(76)

[Note 76: One of the obscure satirical allusions contained in this poem. Doubtless the joke was perfectly intelligible to the habitues of contemporary Saint Petersburg society. Viazemski of course is the poet and prince, Pushkin's friend.]

XLVII

But where Melpomene doth rave
With lengthened howl and accent loud,
And her bespangled robe doth wave
Before a cold indifferent crowd,
And where Thalia softly dreams
And heedless of approval seems,
Terpsichore alone among
Her sisterhood delights the young
(So 'twas with us in former years,
In your young days and also mine),
Never upon my heroine
The jealous dame her lorgnette veers,
The connoisseur his glances throws
From boxes or from stalls in rows.

XLVIII

To the assembly her they bear.
There the confusion, pressure, heat,
The crash of music, candles' glare
And rapid whirl of many feet,
The ladies' dresses airy, light,
The motley moving mass and bright,
Young ladies in a vasty curve,
To strike imagination serve.
'Tis there that arrant fops display
Their insolence and waistcoats white
And glasses unemployed all night;
Thither hussars on leave will stray
To clank the spur, delight the fair —
And vanish like a bird in air.

XLIX

Full many a lovely star hath night
And Moscow many a beauty fair:
Yet clearer shines than every light
The moon in the blue atmosphere.
And she to whom my lyre would fain,
Yet dares not, dedicate its strain,
Shines in the female firmament
Like a full moon magnificent.
Lo! with what pride celestial
Her feet the earth beneath her press!
Her heart how full of gentleness,
Her glance how wild yet genial!
Enough, enough, conclude thy lay —
For folly's dues thou hadst to pay.

L

Noise, laughter, bowing, hurrying mixt,
Gallop, mazurka, waltzing — see!
A pillar by, two aunts betwixt,
Tania, observed by nobody,
Looks upon all with absent gaze
And hates the world's discordant ways.
'Tis noisome to her there: in thought
Again her rural life she sought,
The hamlet, the poor villagers,
The little solitary nook
Where shining runs the tiny brook,
Her garden, and those books of hers,
And the lime alley's twilight dim
Where the first time she met with *him*.

LI

Thus widely meditation erred,
Forgot the world, the noisy ball,
Whilst from her countenance ne'er stirred
The eyes of a grave general.
Both aunts looked knowing as a judge,
Each gave Tattiana's arm a nudge
And in a whisper did repeat:
"Look quickly to your left, my sweet!"
"The left? Why, what on earth is there?" —
"No matter, look immediately.
There, in that knot of company,
Two dressed in uniform appear —

Ah! he has gone the other way” —
“Who? Is it that stout general, pray?” —

LII

Let us congratulations pay
To our Tattiana conquering,
And for a time our course delay,
That I forget not whom I sing.
Let me explain that in my song
“I celebrate a comrade young
And the extent of his caprice;
O epic Muse, my powers increase
And grant success to labour long;
Having a trusty staff bestowed,
Grant that I err not on the road.”
Enough! my pack is now unslung —
To classicism I’ve homage paid,
Though late, have a beginning made.(77)

[Note 77: Many will consider this mode of bringing the canto to a conclusion of more than doubtful taste. The poet evidently aims a stroke at the pedantic and narrow-minded criticism to which original genius, emancipated from the strait-waistcoat of conventionality, is not unfrequently subjected.]

CANTO THE EIGHTH

The Great World

‘Fare thee well, and if for ever,
Still for ever fare thee well.’ — Byron

Canto the Eighth

[Saint Petersburg, Boldino, Tsarskoe Selo, 1880-1881]

I

In the Lyceum’s noiseless shade
As in a garden when I grew,
I Apuleius gladly read
But would not look at Cicero.
‘Twas then in valleys lone, remote,
In spring-time, heard the cygnet’s note
By waters shining tranquilly,
That first the Muse appeared to me.
Into the study of the boy
There came a sudden flash of light,
The Muse revealed her first delight,
Sang childhood’s pastimes and its joy,
Glory with which our history teems
And the heart’s agitated dreams.

II

And the world met her smilingly,
A first success light pinions gave,
The old Derjavine noticed me,
And blest me, sinking to the grave.(78)
Then my companions young with pleasure
In the unfettered hours of leisure
Her utterances ever heard,
And by a partial temper stirred
And boiling o’er with friendly heat,
They first of all my brow did wreath
And an encouragement did breathe
That my coy Muse might sing more sweet.
O triumphs of my guileless days,
How sweet a dream your memories raise!

[Note 78: This touching scene produced a lasting impression on Pushkin's mind. It took place at a public examination at the Lyceum, on which occasion the boy poet produced a poem. The incident recalls the "Mon cher Tibulle" of Voltaire and the youthful Parny (see Note 42). Derjavine flourished during the reigns of Catherine the Second and Alexander the First. His poems are stiff and formal in style and are not much thought of by contemporary Russians. But a century back a very infinitesimal endowment of literary ability was sufficient to secure imperial reward and protection, owing to the backward state of the empire. Stanza II properly concludes with this line, the remainder having been expunged either by the author himself or the censors. I have filled up the void with lines from a fragment left by the author having reference to this canto.]

III

Passion's wild sway I then allowed,
Her promptings unto law did make,
Pursuits I followed of the crowd,
My sportive Muse I used to take
To many a noisy feast and fight,
Terror of guardians of the night;
And wild festivities among
She brought with her the gift of song.
Like a Bacchante in her sport
Beside the cup she sang her rhymes
And the young revellers of past times
Vociferously paid her court,
And I, amid the friendly crowd,
Of my light paramour was proud.

IV

But I abandoned their array,
And fled afar — she followed me.
How oft the kindly Muse away
Hath whiled the road's monotony,
Entranced me by some mystic tale.
How oft beneath the moonbeams pale
Like Leonora did she ride(79)
With me Caucasian rocks beside!
How oft to the Crimean shore
She led me through nocturnal mist
Unto the sounding sea to list,
Where Nereids murmur evermore,
And where the billows hoarsely raise
To God eternal hymns of praise.

[Note 79: See Note 30, "Leonora," a poem by Gottfried Augustus Burger, b. 1748, d. 1794.]

V

Then, the far capital forgot,
Its splendour and its blandishments,
In poor Moldavia cast her lot,
She visited the humble tents
Of migratory gipsy hordes —
And wild among them grew her words —
Our godlike tongue she could exchange
For savage speech, uncouth and strange,
And ditties of the steppe she loved.
But suddenly all changed around!
Lo! in my garden was she found
And as a country damsel roved,
A pensive sorrow in her glance
And in her hand a French romance.

VI

Now for the first time I my Muse
Lead into good society,
Her steppe-like beauties I peruse
With jealous fear, anxiety.
Through dense aristocratic rows
Of diplomats and warlike beaux
And supercilious dames she glides,
Sits down and gazes on all sides —
Amazed at the confusing crowd,
Variety of speech and vests,
Deliberate approach of guests
Who to the youthful hostess bowed,
And the dark fringe of men, like frames
Enclosing pictures of fair dames.

VII

Assemblies oligarchical
Please her by their decorum fixed,
The rigour of cold pride and all
Titles and ages intermixed.
But who in that choice company
With clouded brow stands silently?
Unknown to all he doth appear,
A vision desolate and drear
Doth seem to him the festal scene.
Doth his brow wretchedness declare

Or suffering pride? Why is he there?
Who may he be? Is it Eugene?
Pray is it he? It is the same.
“And is it long since back he came?”

VIII

“Is he the same or grown more wise?
Still doth the misanthrope appear?
He has returned, say in what guise?
What is his latest character?
What doth he act? Is it Melmoth,(80)
Philanthropist or patriot,
Childe Harold, quaker, devotee,
Or other mask donned playfully?
Or a good fellow for the nonce,
Like you and me and all the rest? —
But this is my advice, ‘twere best
Not to behave as he did once —
Society he duped enow.”
“Is he known to you?” — ”Yes and No.”

[Note 80: A romance by Maturin.]

IX

Wherefore regarding him express
Perverse, unfavourable views?
Is it that human restlessness
For ever carps, condemns, pursues?
Is it that ardent souls of flame
By recklessness amuse or shame
Selfish nonentities around?
That mind which yearns for space is bound?
And that too often we receive
Professions eagerly for deeds,
That crass stupidity misleads,
That we by cant ourselves deceive,
That mediocrity alone
Without disgust we look upon?

X

Happy he who in youth was young,
Happy who timely grew mature,
He who life’s frosts which early wrung
Hath gradually learnt to endure;

By visions who was ne'er deranged
Nor from the mob polite estranged,
At twenty who was prig or swell,
At thirty who was married well,
At fifty who relief obtained
From public and from private ties,
Who glory, wealth and dignities
Hath tranquilly in turn attained,
And unto whom we all allude
As to a worthy man and good!

XI

But sad is the reflection made,
In vain was youth by us received,
That we her constantly betrayed
And she at last hath us deceived;
That our desires which noblest seemed,
The purest of the dreams we dreamed,
Have one by one all withered grown
Like rotten leaves by Autumn strown —
'Tis fearful to anticipate
Nought but of dinners a long row,
To look on life as on a show,
Eternally to imitate
The seemly crowd, partaking nought
Its passions and its modes of thought.

XII

The butt of scandal having been,
'Tis dreadful — ye agree, I hope —
To pass with reasonable men
For a fictitious misanthrope,
A visionary mortified,
Or monster of Satanic pride,
Or e'en the "Demon" of my strain.(81)
Oneguine — take him up again —
In duel having killed his friend
And reached, with nought his mind to engage,
The twenty-sixth year of his age,
Wearied of leisure in the end,
Without profession, business, wife,
He knew not how to spend his life.

[Note 81: The "Demon," a short poem by Pushkin which at its first appearance created some excitement in Russian society. A more appropriate, or at any rate explanatory title, would have been

the Tempter. It is descriptive of the first manifestation of doubt and cynicism in his youthful mind, allegorically as the visits of a "demon." Russian society was moved to embody this imaginary demon in the person of a certain friend of Pushkin's. This must not be confounded with Lermontoff's poem bearing the same title upon which Rubinstein's new opera, "Il Demonio," is founded.]

XIII

Him a disquietude did seize,
A wish from place to place to roam,
A very troublesome disease,
In some a willing martyrdom.
Abandoned he his country seat,
Of woods and fields the calm retreat,
Where every day before his eyes
A blood-bespattered shade would rise,
And aimless journeys did commence —
But still remembrance to him clings,
His travels like all other things
Inspired but weariness intense;
Returning, from his ship amid
A ball he fell as Tchatzki did.(82)

[Note 82: Tchatzki, one of the principal characters in Griboyedoff's celebrated comedy "Woe from Wit" (Gore ot Ouma).]

XIV

Behold, the crowd begins to stir,
A whisper runs along the hall,
A lady draws the hostess near,
Behind her a grave general.
Her manners were deliberate,
Reserved, but not inanimate,
Her eyes no saucy glance address,
There was no angling for success.
Her features no grimaces bleared;
Of affectation innocent,
Calm and without embarrassment,
A faithful model she appeared
Of "comme il faut." Shishkoff, forgive!
I can't translate the adjective.(83)

[Note 83: Shishkoff was a member of the literary school which cultivated the vernacular as opposed to the Arzamass or Gallic school, to which the poet himself and his uncle Vassili Pushkin belonged. He was admiral, author, and minister of education.]

XV

Ladies in crowds around her close,
Her with a smile old women greet,
The men salute with lower bows
And watch her eye's full glance to meet.
Maidens before her meekly move
Along the hall, and high above
The crowd doth head and shoulders rise
The general who accompanies.
None could her beautiful declare,
Yet viewing her from head to foot,
None could a trace of that impute,
Which in the elevated sphere
Of London life is "vulgar" called
And ruthless fashion hath blackballed.

XVI

I like this word exceedingly
Although it will not bear translation,
With us 'tis quite a novelty
Not high in general estimation;
'Twould serve ye in an epigram —
But turn we once more to our dame.
Enchanting, but unwittingly,
At table she was sitting by
The brilliant Nina Voronskoi,
The Neva's Cleopatra, and
None the conviction could withstand
That Nina's marble symmetry,
Though dazzling its effulgence white,
Could not eclipse her neighbour's light.

XVII

"And is it," meditates Eugene.
"And is it she? It must be — no —
How! from the waste of steppes unseen," —
And the eternal lorgnette through
Frequent and rapid doth his glance
Seek the forgotten countenance
Familiar to him long ago.
"Inform me, prince, pray dost thou know
The lady in the crimson cap
Who with the Spanish envoy speaks?" —
The prince's eye Oneguine seeks:
"Ah! long the world hath missed thy shape!

But stop! I will present thee, if
You choose." — "But who is she?" — "My wife."

XVIII

"So thou art wed! I did not know.
Long ago?" — "'Tis the second year."
"To — ?" — "Larina." — "Tattiana?" — "So.
And dost thou know her?" — "We live near."
"Then come with me." The prince proceeds,
His wife approaches, with him leads
His relative and friend as well.
The lady's glance upon him fell —
And though her soul might be confused,
And vehemently though amazed
She on the apparition gazed,
No signs of trouble her accused,
A mien unaltered she preserved,
Her bow was easy, unreserved.

XIX

Ah no! no faintness her attacked
Nor sudden turned she red or white,
Her brow she did not e'en contract
Nor yet her lip compressed did bite.
Though he surveyed her at his ease,
Not the least trace Oneguine sees
Of the Tattiana of times fled.
He conversation would have led —
But could not. Then she questioned him: —
"Had he been long here, and where from?
Straight from their province had he come?" —
Cast upwards then her eyeballs dim
Unto her husband, went away —
Transfixed Oneguine mine doth stay.

XX

Is this the same Tattiana, say,
Before whom once in solitude,
In the beginning of this lay,
Deep in the distant province rude,
Impelled by zeal for moral worth,
He salutary rules poured forth?
The maid whose note he still possessed
Wherein the heart its vows expressed,

Where all upon the surface lies, —
That girl — but he must dreaming be —
That girl whom once on a time he
Could in a humble sphere despise,
Can she have been a moment gone
Thus haughty, careless in her tone?

XXI

He quits the fashionable throng
And meditative homeward goes,
Visions, now sad, now grateful, long
Do agitate his late repose.
He wakes — they with a letter come —
The Princess N. will be at home
On such a day. O Heavens, 'tis she!
Oh! I accept. And instantly
He a polite reply doth scrawl.
What hath he dreamed? What hath occurred?
In the recesses what hath stirred
Of a heart cold and cynical?
Vexation? Vanity? or strove
Again the plague of boyhood — love?

XXII

The hours once more Oneguine counts,
Impatient waits the close of day,
But ten strikes and his sledge he mounts
And gallops to her house away.
Trembling he seeks the young princess —
Tattiana finds in loneliness.
Together moments one or two
They sat, but conversation's flow
Deserted Eugene. He, distraught,
Sits by her gloomily, desponds,
Scarce to her questions he responds,
Full of exasperating thought.
He fixedly upon her stares —
She calm and unconcerned appears.

XXIII

The husband comes and interferes
With this unpleasant *tete-a-tete*,
With Eugene pranks of former years
And jests doth recapitulate.

They talked and laughed. The guests arrived.
The conversation was revived
By the coarse wit of worldly hate;
But round the hostess scintillate
Light sallies without coxcombry,
Awhile sound conversation seems
To banish far unworthy themes
And platitudes and pedantry,
And never was the ear affright
By liberties or loose or light.

XXIV

And yet the city's flower was there,
Noblesse and models of the mode,
Faces which we meet everywhere
And necessary fools allowed.
Behold the dames who once were fine
With roses, caps and looks malign;
Some marriageable maids behold,
Blank, unapproachable and cold.
Lo, the ambassador who speaks
Economy political,
And with gray hair ambrosial
The old man who has had his freaks,
Renowned for his acumen, wit,
But now ridiculous a bit.

XXV

Behold Sabouroff, whom the age
For baseness of the spirit scorns,
Saint Priest, who every album's page
With blunted pencil-point adorns.
Another tribune of the ball
Hung like a print against the wall,
Pink as Palm Sunday cherubim,(84)
Motionless, mute, tight-laced and trim.
The traveller, bird of passage he,
Stiff, overstarched and insolent,
Awakens secret merriment
By his embarrassed dignity —
Mute glances interchanged aside
Meet punishment for him provide.

[Note 84: On Palm Sunday the Russians carry branches, or used to do so. These branches were adorned with little painted pictures of cherubs with the ruddy complexions of tradition. Hence the

comparison.]

XXVI

But my Oneguine the whole eve
Within his mind Tattiana bore,
Not the young timid maid, believe,
Enamoured, simple-minded, poor,
But the indifferent princess,
Divinity without access
Of the imperial Neva's shore.
O Men, how very like ye are
To Eve the universal mother,
Possession hath no power to please,
The serpent to unlawful trees
Aye bids ye in some way or other —
Unless forbidden fruit we eat,
Our paradise is no more sweet.

XXVII

Ah! how Tattiana was transformed,
How thoroughly her part she took!
How soon to habits she conformed
Which crushing dignity must brook!
Who would the maiden innocent
In the unmoved, magnificent
Autocrat of the drawing-room seek?
And he had made her heart beat quick!
'Twas he whom, amid nightly shades,
Whilst Morpheus his approach delays,
She mourned and to the moon would raise
The languid eye of love-sick maids,
Dreaming perchance in weal or woe
To end with him her path below.

XXVIII

To Love all ages lowly bend,
But the young unpolluted heart
His gusts should fertilize, amend,
As vernal storms the fields athwart.
Youth freshens beneath Passion's showers,
Develops and matures its powers,
And thus in season the rich field
Gay flowers and luscious fruit doth yield.
But at a later, sterile age,

The solstice of our earthly years,
Mournful Love's deadly trace appears
As storms which in chill autumn rage
And leave a marsh the fertile ground
And devastate the woods around.

XXIX

There was no doubt! Eugene, alas!
Tattiana loved as when a lad,
Both day and night he now must pass
In love-lorn meditation sad.
Careless of every social rule,
The crystals of her vestibule
He daily in his drives drew near
And like a shadow haunted her.
Enraptured was he if allowed
To swathe her shoulders in the furs,
If his hot hand encountered hers,
Or he dispersed the motley crowd
Of lackeys in her pathway grouped,
Or to pick up her kerchief stooped.

XXX

She seemed of him oblivious,
Despite the anguish of his breast,
Received him freely at her house,
At times three words to him addressed
In company, or simply bowed,
Or recognized not in the crowd.
No coquetry was there, I vouch —
Society endures not such!
Oneguine's cheek grew ashy pale,
Either she saw not or ignored;
Oneguine wasted; on my word,
Already he grew phthisical.
All to the doctors Eugene send,
And they the waters recommend.

XXXI

He went not — sooner was prepared
To write his forefathers to warn
Of his approach; but nothing cared
Tattiana — thus the sex is born. —
He obstinately will remain,

Still hopes, endeavours, though in vain.
Sickness more courage doth command
Than health, so with a trembling hand
A love epistle he doth scrawl.
Though correspondence as a rule
He used to hate — and was no fool —
Yet suffering emotional
Had rendered him an invalid;
But word for word his letter read.

Oneguine's Letter to Tattiana

All is foreseen. My secret drear
Will sound an insult in your ear.
What acrimonious scorn I trace
Depicted on your haughty face!
What do I ask? What cause assigned
That I to you reveal my mind?
To what malicious merriment,
It may be, I yield nutriment!

Meeting you in times past by chance,
Warmth I imagined in your glance,
But, knowing not the actual truth,
Restrained the impulses of youth;
Also my wretched liberty
I would not part with finally;
This separated us as well —
Lenski, unhappy victim, fell,
From everything the heart held dear
I then resolved my heart to tear;
Unknown to all, without a tie,
I thought — retirement, liberty,
Will happiness replace. My God!
How I have erred and felt the rod!

No, ever to behold your face,
To follow you in every place,
Your smiling lips, your beaming eyes,
To watch with lovers' ecstasies,
Long listen, comprehend the whole
Of your perfections in my soul,
Before you agonized to die —
This, this were true felicity!

But such is not for me. I brood
Daily of love in solitude.

My days of life approach their end,
Yet I in idleness expend
The remnant destiny concedes,
And thus each stubbornly proceeds.
I feel, allotted is my span;
But, that life longer may remain,
At morn I must assuredly
Know that thy face that day I see.

I tremble lest my humble prayer
You with stern countenance declare
The artifice of villany —
I hear your harsh, reproachful cry.
If ye but knew how dreadful 'tis
To bear love's parching agonies —
To burn, yet reason keep awake
The fever of the blood to slake —
A passionate desire to bend
And, sobbing at your feet, to blend
Entreaties, woes and prayers, confess
All that the heart would fain express —
Yet with a feigned frigidity
To arm the tongue and e'en the eye,
To be in conversation clear
And happy unto you appear.

So be it! But internal strife
I cannot longer wage concealed.
The die is cast! Thine is my life!
Into thy hands my fate I yield!

XXXII

No answer! He another sent.
Epistle second, note the third,
Remained unnoticed. Once he went
To an assembly — she appeared
Just as he entered. How severe!
She will not see, she will not hear.
Alas! she is as hard, behold,
And frosty as a Twelfth Night cold.
Oh, how her lips compressed restrain
The indignation of her heart!
A sidelong look doth Eugene dart:
Where, where, remorse, compassion, pain?
Where, where, the trace of tears? None, none!
Upon her brow sits wrath alone —

XXXIII

And it may be a secret dread
Lest the world or her lord divine
A certain little escapade
Well known unto Oneguine mine.
'Tis hopeless! Homeward doth he flee
Cursing his own stupidity,
And brooding o'er the ills he bore,
Society renounced once more.
Then in the silent cabinet
He in imagination saw
The time when Melancholy's claw
'Mid worldly pleasures chased him yet,
Caught him and by the collar took
And shut him in a lonely nook.

XXXIV

He read as vainly as before,
perusing Gibbon and Rousseau,
Manzoni, Herder and Chamfort,(85)
Madame de Stael, Bichat, Tissot:
He read the unbelieving Bayle,
Also the works of Fontenelle,
Some Russian authors he perused —
Nought in the universe refused:
Nor almanacs nor newspapers,
Which lessons unto us repeat,
Wherein I castigation get;
And where a madrigal occurs
Writ in my honour now and then —
E sempre bene, gentlemen!

[Note 85: Owing to the unstable nature of fame the names of some of the above literary worthies necessitate reference at this period in the nineteenth century. Johann Gottfried von Herder, b. 1744, d. 1803, a German philosopher, philanthropist and author; was the personal friend of Goethe and held the poet of court chaplain at Weimar. His chief work is entitled, "Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind," in 4 vols. Sebastien Roch Nicholas Chamfort, b. 1741, d. 1794, was a French novelist and dramatist of the Revolution, who contrary to his real wishes became entangled in its meshes. He exercised a considerable influence over certain of its leaders, notably Mirabeau and Sieyes. He is said to have originated the title of the celebrated tract from the pen of the latter. "What is the Tiers Etat? Nothing. What ought it to be? Everything." He ultimately experienced the common destiny in those days, was thrown into prison and though shortly afterwards released, his incarceration had such an effect upon his mind that he committed suicide. Marie Francois Xavier Bichat, b. 1771, d. 1802, a French anatomist and physiologist of eminence. His principal works are a

“Traite des Membranes,” “Anatomie generale appliquee a la Physiologie et a la Medecine,” and “Recherches Physiologiques sur la Vie et la Mort.” He died at an early age from constant exposure to noxious exhalations during his researches. Pierre Francois Tissot, b. 1768, d. 1864, a French writer of the Revolution and Empire. In 1812 he was appointed by Napoleon editor of the Gazette de France. He wrote histories of the Revolution, of Napoleon and of France. He was likewise a poet and author of a work entitled “Les trois Irlandais Conjures, ou l’ombre d’Emmet,” and is believed to have edited Foy’s “History of the Peninsular War.” The above catalogue by its heterogeneous composition gives a fair idea of the intellectual movement in Russia from the Empress Catherine the Second downwards. It is characterized by a feverish thirst for encyclopaedic knowledge without a corresponding power of assimilation.]

XXXV

But what results? His eyes peruse
But thoughts meander far away —
Ideas, desires and woes confuse
His intellect in close array.
His eyes, the printed lines betwixt,
On lines invisible are fixt;
‘Twas these he read and these alone
His spirit was intent upon.
They were the wonderful traditions
Of kindly, dim antiquity,
Dreams with no continuity,
Prophecies, threats and apparitions,
The lively trash of stories long
Or letters of a maiden young.

XXXVI

And by degrees upon him grew
A lethargy of sense, a trance,
And soon imagination threw
Before him her wild game of chance.
And now upon the snow in thaw
A young man motionless he saw,
As one who bivouacs afield,
And heard a voice cry — *Why! He’s killed!* —
And now he views forgotten foes,
Poltroons and men of slanderous tongue,
Bevies of treacherous maidens young;
Of thankless friends the circle rose,
A mansion — by the window, see!
She sits alone — ’tis ever *she!*

XXXVII

So frequently his mind would stray
He well-nigh lost the use of sense,
Almost became a poet say —
Oh! what had been his eminence!
Indeed, by force of magnetism
A Russian poem's mechanism
My scholar without aptitude
At this time almost understood.
How like a poet was my chum
When, sitting by his fire alone
Whilst cheerily the embers shone,
He "Benedetta" used to hum,
Or "Idol mio," and in the grate
Would lose his slippers or gazette.

XXXVIII

Time flies! a genial air abroad,
Winter resigned her empire white,
Oneguine ne'er as poet showed
Nor died nor lost his senses quite.
Spring cheered him up, and he resigned
His chambers close wherein confined
He marmot-like did hibernate,
His double sashes and his grate,
And sallied forth one brilliant morn —
Along the Neva's bank he sleighs,
On the blue blocks of ice the rays
Of the sun glisten; muddy, worn,
The snow upon the streets doth melt —
Whither along them doth he pelt?

XXXIX

Oneguine whither gallops? Ye
Have guessed already. Yes, quite so!
Unto his own Tattiana he,
Incorrigible rogue, doth go.
Her house he enters, ghastly white,
The vestibule finds empty quite —
He enters the saloon. 'Tis blank!
A door he opens. But why shrank
He back as from a sudden blow? —
Alone the princess sitteth there,
Pallid and with dishevelled hair,
Gazing upon a note below.

Her tears flow plentifully and
Her cheek reclines upon her hand.

XL

Oh! who her speechless agonies
Could not in that brief moment guess!
Who now could fail to recognize
Tattiana in the young princess!
Tortured by pangs of wild regret,
Eugene fell prostrate at her feet —
She starts, nor doth a word express,
But gazes on Oneguine's face
Without amaze or wrath displayed:
His sunken eye and aspect faint,
Imploring looks and mute complaint
She comprehends. The simple maid
By fond illusions once possest
Is once again made manifest.

XLI

His kneeling posture he retains —
Calmly her eyes encounter his —
Insensible her hand remains
Beneath his lips' devouring kiss.
What visions then her fancy thronged —
A breathless silence then, prolonged —
But finally she softly said:
"Enough, arise! for much we need
Without disguise ourselves explain.
Oneguine, hast forgotten yet
The hour when — Fate so willed — we met
In the lone garden and the lane?
How meekly then I heard you preach —
To-day it is my turn to teach.

XLII

"Oneguine, I was younger then,
And better, if I judge aright;
I loved you — what did I obtain?
Affection how did you requite?
But with austerity! — for you
No novelty — is it not true? —
Was the meek love a maiden feels.
But now — my very blood congeals,

Calling to mind your icy look
And sermon — but in that dread hour
I blame not your behaviour —
An honourable course ye took,
Displayed a noble rectitude —
My soul is filled with gratitude!

XLIII

“Then, in the country, is’t not true?
And far removed from rumour vain;
I did not please you. Why pursue
Me now, inflict upon me pain? —
Wherefore am I your quarry held? —
Is it that I am now compelled
To move in fashionable life,
That I am rich, a prince’s wife? —
Because my lord, in battles maimed,
Is petted by the Emperor? —
That my dishonour would ensure
A notoriety proclaimed,
And in society might shed
A bastard fame prohibited?

XLIV

“I weep. And if within your breast
My image hath not disappeared,
Know that your sarcasm ill-suppressed,
Your conversation cold and hard,
If the choice in my power were,
To lawless love I should prefer —
And to these letters and these tears.
For visions of my childish years
Then ye were barely generous,
Age immature averse to cheat —
But now — what brings you to my feet? —
How mean, how pusillanimous!
A prudent man like you and brave
To shallow sentiment a slave!

XLV

“Oneguine, all this sumptuousness,
The gilding of life’s vanities,
In the world’s vortex my success,
My splendid house and gaieties —

What are they? Gladly would I yield
This life in masquerade concealed,
This glitter, riot, emptiness,
For my wild garden and bookcase, —
Yes! for our unpretending home,
Oneguine — the beloved place
Where the first time I saw your face, —
Or for the solitary tomb
Wherein my poor old nurse doth lie
Beneath a cross and shrubbery.

XLVI

“‘Twas possible then, happiness —
Nay, near — but destiny decreed —
My lot is fixed — with thoughtlessness
It may be that I did proceed —
With bitter tears my mother prayed,
And for Tattiana, mournful maid,
Indifferent was her future fate.
I married — now, I supplicate —
For ever your Tattiana leave.
Your heart possesses, I know well,
Honour and pride inflexible.
I love you — to what end deceive? —
But I am now another’s bride —
For ever faithful will abide.”

XLVII

She rose — departed. But Eugene
Stood as if struck by lightning fire.
What a storm of emotions keen
Raged round him and of balked desire!
And hark! the clank of spurs is heard
And Tania’s husband soon appeared. —
But now our hero we must leave
Just at a moment which I grieve
Must be pronounced unfortunate —
For long — for ever. To be sure
Together we have wandered o’er
The world enough. Congratulate
Each other as the shore we climb!
Hurrah! it long ago was time!

XLVIII

Reader, whoever thou mayst be,
Foeman or friend, I do aspire
To part in amity with thee!
Adieu! whate'er thou didst desire
From careless stanzas such as these,
Of passion reminiscences,
Pictures of the amusing scene,
Repose from labour, satire keen,
Or faults of grammar on its page —
God grant that all who herein glance,
In serious mood or dalliance
Or in a squabble to engage,
May find a crumb to satisfy.
Now we must separate. Good-bye!

XLIX

And farewell thou, my gloomy friend,
Thou also, my ideal true,
And thou, persistent to the end,
My little book. With thee I knew
All that a poet could desire,
Oblivion of life's tempest dire,
Of friends the grateful intercourse —
Oh, many a year hath run its course
Since I beheld Eugene and young
Tattiana in a misty dream,
And my romance's open theme
Glittered in a perspective long,
And I discerned through Fancy's prism
Distinctly not its mechanism.

L

But ye to whom, when friendship heard,
The first-fruits of my tale I read,
As Saadi anciently averred — (86)
Some are afar and some are dead.
Without them Eugene is complete;
And thou, from whom Tattiana sweet;
Was drawn, ideal of my lay —
Ah! what hath fate not torn away!
Happy who quit life's banquet seat
Before the dregs they shall divine
Of the cup brimming o'er with wine —
Who the romance do not complete,

But who abandon it — as I
Have my Oneguine — suddenly.

[Note 86: The celebrated Persian poet. Pushkin uses the passage referred to as an epigraph to the "Fountain of Baktchiserai." It runs thus: "Many, even as I, visited that fountain, but some of these are dead and some have journeyed afar." Saadi was born in 1189 at Shiraz and was a reputed descendant from Ali, Mahomet's son-in-law. In his youth he was a soldier; was taken prisoner by the Crusaders and forced to work in the ditches of Tripoli, whence he was ransomed by a merchant whose daughter he subsequently married. He did not commence writing till an advanced age. His principal work is the "Gulistan," or "Rose Garden," a work which has been translated into almost every European tongue.]

THE END

The Short Stories and Unfinished Novels



Pushkin's room while a student at the Tsarskoye Selo Lyceum

PETER THE GREAT'S NEGRO



Translated by T. Keane

This is an unfinished historical novel, which is now considered to be Pushkin's first prose work. The author began writing the novel towards the end of July, 1827 in Mikhailovskoe and in spring 1828 he is recorded to have read several drafts to his friends. During Pushkin's lifetime, only two fragments of the work were published in the literary magazine *Severnye Tsvety* in 1829 and in the newspaper *Literaturnaya Gazeta* the following year. After Pushkin's untimely death, the entire extant text was published by the editors of the journal *Sovremennik* in 1837, who also gave the fragment its current title. There is no recorded evidence of why Pushkin left *Peter the Great's Negro* unfinished and sadly no outline has survived to show how he intended to develop the plot.

The narrative introduces the character Ibrahim, who is loosely based on Pushkin's maternal great-grandfather, Abram Petrovich Gannibal, a black African who was brought to Russia during the reign of Peter the Great. Pushkin's interest in history and genealogy help to portray the transformation of Russia at the beginning of 18th century. Several Russian critics have bemoaned the unfinished state of the text, believing that had *Peter the Great's Negro* been completed, it would have been one of the greatest novels in the Russian language.



HANNIBAL AND SUVOROFF.

*Major Gannibal, the novel's protagonist and Pushkin's great grandfather, speaking with
Alexander Suvorov*

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I

AMONG the young men sent abroad by Peter the Great for the acquisition of knowledge indispensable to a country in a state of transition, was his godson, the Negro, Ibrahim. After being educated in the Military School at Paris, which he left with the rank of Captain of Artillery, he distinguished himself in the Spanish war and, severely wounded, returned to Paris. The Emperor, in the midst of his vast labors, never ceased to inquire after his favorite, and he always received flattering accounts of his progress and conduct. Peter was exceedingly pleased with him, and repeatedly requested him to return to Russia, but Ibrahim was in no hurry. He excused himself under various pretexts: now it was his wound, now it was a wish to complete his education, now a want of money; and Peter indulgently complied with his wishes, begged him to take care of his health, thanked him for his zeal for study, and although extremely thrifty where his own expenses were concerned, he did not stint his favorite in money, adding to the ducats fatherly advice and cautionary admonition.

According to the testimony of all the historical memoirs nothing could be compared with the frivolity, folly and luxury of the French of that period. The last years of the reign of Louis the Fourteenth, remarkable for the strict piety, gravity, and decorum of the Court, had left no traces behind. The Duke of Orleans, uniting many brilliant qualities with vices of every kind, unfortunately did not possess the slightest shadow of hypocrisy. The orgies of the Palais Royal were no secret in Paris; the example was infectious. At that time Law appeared upon the scene; greed for money was united to the thirst for pleasure and dissipation; estates were squandered, morals perished, Frenchmen laughed and calculated, and the kingdom was falling apart to the playful refrains of satirical vaudevilles.

In the meantime society presented a most entertaining picture. Culture and the need of amusement brought all ranks together. Wealth, amiability, renown, talent, even eccentricity — everything that fed curiosity or promised pleasure, was received with the same indulgence. Literature, learning and philosophy forsook their quiet studies and appeared in the circles of the great world to render homage to fashion and to govern it. Women reigned, but no longer demanded adoration. Superficial politeness replaced the profound respect formerly shown to them. The pranks of the Duke de Richelieu, the Alcibiades of modern Athens, belong to history, and give an idea of the morals of that period.

*“Terns fortuné, marqué par la licence,
Où la folie, agitant son grelot,
D’un pied léger parcourt toute la France,
Où nul mortel ne daigne être dévot,
Où l’on fait tout excepté pénitence.”*

The appearance of Ibrahim, his looks, culture and native intelligence excited general attention in Paris.

All the ladies were anxious to see “le nègre du czar” at their houses, and vied with each other in trying to capture him. The Regent invited him more than once to his merry evening parties; he assisted at the suppers animated by the youth of Arouet, the old age of Chaulieu, and the conversations of Montesquieu and Fontenelle. He did not miss a single ball, fête or first night, and he gave himself up to the general whirl with all the ardor of his years and nature. But the thought of exchanging these distractions, these brilliant amusements for the harsh simplicity of the Petersburg Court was not the only thing that dismayed Ibrahim; other and stronger ties bound him to Paris. The young African was in love.

The Countess D — , although no longer in the first bloom of youth, was still renowned for her beauty. On leaving the convent at seventeen, she had been married to a man with whom she had not had time to fall in love, and who later on did not take the trouble to gain her affection. Rumor ascribed several lovers to her, but such was the indulgence of the world, that she enjoyed a good reputation, for nobody was able to reproach her with any ridiculous or scandalous adventure. Her house was one of the most fashionable, and the best Parisian society made it their rendezvous. Ibrahim was introduced to her by young Merville, who was generally looked upon as her latest lover — and who did all in his power to obtain credit for the report.

The Countess received Ibrahim courteously, but without any particular attention: this flattered him. Generally the young Negro was regarded in the light of a curiosity; people used to surround him and overwhelm him with compliments and questions — and this curiosity, although concealed by a show of graciousness, offended his vanity. Women’s delightful attention, almost the sole aim of our exertions, not only af-

forded him no pleasure, but even filled him with bitterness and indignation. He felt that he was for them a kind of rare beast, a peculiar alien creature, accidentally brought into a world, with which he had nothing in common. He even envied people who remained unnoticed, and considered them fortunate in their insignificance.

The thought, that nature had not created him to enjoy requited love, saved him from self-assurance and vain pretensions, and added a rare charm to his behavior toward women. His conversation was simple and dignified; he pleased Countess D — , who had grown tired of the eternal jokes and subtle insinuations of French wits. Ibrahim frequently visited her. Little by little she became accustomed to the young Negro’s appearance, and even began to find something agreeable in that curly head, that stood out so black in the midst of the powdered perukes in her reception-room (Ibrahim had been wounded in the head, and wore a bandage instead of a peruke). He was twenty-seven years of age, and was tall and slender, and more than one beauty glanced at him with a feeling more flattering than simple curiosity. But the prejudiced Ibrahim either did not observe anything

of this or merely looked upon it as coquetry. But when his glances met those of the Countess, his distrust vanished. Her eyes expressed such winning kindness, her manner toward him was so simple, so unconstrained, that it was impossible to suspect her of the least shadow of coquetry or raillery.

The thought of love had not entered his head, but to see the Countess each day had become a necessity to him. He sought her out everywhere, and every meeting with her seemed an unexpected favor from heaven. The Countess guessed his feelings before he himself did. There is no denying that a love, which is without hope and which demands nothing, touches the female heart more surely than all the devices of seduction. In the presence of Ibrahim, the Countess followed all his movements, listened to every word that he said; without him she became thoughtful, and fell into her usual abstraction. Merville was the first to observe this mutual inclination, and he congratulated Ibrahim. Nothing inflames love so much as the encouraging observations of a bystander: love is blind, and, having no trust in itself, readily grasps hold of every support.

Merville's words roused Ibrahim. He had never till then imagined the possibility of possessing the woman that he loved; hope suddenly illumined his soul; he fell madly in love. In vain did the Countess, alarmed by the ardor of his passion, seek to oppose to it the admonitions of friendship and the counsels of prudence; she herself was beginning to weaken.... Incautious rewards swiftly followed one another. And at last, carried away by the force of the passion she had herself inspired, surrendering to its influence, she gave herself to the ravished Ibrahim....

Nothing is hidden from the eyes of the observing world. The Countess's new liaison was soon known to everybody. Some ladies were amazed at her choice; to many it seemed quite natural. Some laughed; others regarded her conduct as unpardonably indiscreet. In the first intoxication of passion, Ibrahim and the Countess noticed nothing, but soon the equivocal jokes of the men and the pointed remarks of the women began to reach their ears. Ibrahim's cold and dignified manner had hitherto protected him from such attacks; he bore them with impatience, and knew not how to ward them off. The Countess, accustomed to the respect of the world, could not calmly bear to see herself an object of gossip and ridicule. With tears in her eyes she complained to Ibrahim, now bitterly reproaching him, now imploring him not to defend her, lest by some useless scandal she should be completely ruined.

A new circumstance further complicated her position: the consequence of imprudent love began to be apparent. Consolation, advice, proposals — all were exhausted and all rejected. The Countess saw that her ruin was inevitable, and in despair awaited it.

As soon as the condition of the Countess became known, tongues wagged again with fresh vigor; sentimental women gave vent to exclamations of horror; men wagered as to whether the Countess would give birth to a white or a black baby. Numerous epigrams were aimed at her

husband, who alone in all Paris knew nothing and suspected nothing.

The fatal moment approached. The condition of the Countess was terrible. Ibrahim visited her every day. He saw her mental and physical strength gradually giving way. Her tears and her terror were renewed every moment. Finally she felt the first pains. Measures were hastily taken. Means were found for getting the Count out of the way. The doctor arrived. Two days before this a poor woman had been persuaded to surrender to strangers her new-born infant; a trusted person had been sent for it. Ibrahim was in the room adjoining the bedchamber where the unhappy Countess lay not daring to breathe, he heard her muffled groans, the maid's whisper, and the doctor's orders. Her sufferings lasted a long time. Her every groan lacerated his heart. Every interval of silence overwhelmed him with terror.... Suddenly he heard the weak cry of a baby — and, unable to repress his elation, he rushed into the Countess's room.... A black baby lay upon the bed at her feet. Ibrahim approached it. His heart beat violently. He blessed his son with a trembling hand. The Countess smiled faintly and stretched out to him her feeble hand, but the doctor, fearing that the excitement might be too great for the patient, dragged Ibrahim away from her bed. The new-born child was placed in a covered basket, and carried out of the house by a secret staircase. Then the other child was brought in, and its cradle placed in the bedroom. Ibrahim took his departure, feeling somewhat more at ease. The Count was expected. He returned late, heard of the happy delivery of his wife, and was much gratified. In this way the public, which had been expecting a great scandal, was deceived in its hope, and was compelled to console itself with malicious gossip alone. Everything resumed its usual course.

But Ibrahim felt that there would have to be a change in his lot, and that sooner or later his relations with the Countess would come to the knowledge of her husband. In that case, whatever might happen, the ruin of the Countess was inevitable. Ibrahim loved passionately and was passionately loved in return, but the Countess was wilful and frivolous; it was not the first time that she had loved. Disgust, and even hatred might replace in her heart the most tender feelings. Ibrahim already foresaw the moment when she would cool toward him. Hitherto he had not known jealousy, but with dread he now felt a presentiment of it; he thought that the pain of separation would be less distressing, and he resolved to break off the unhappy connection, leave Paris, and return to Russia, whither Peter and a vague sense of duty had been calling him for a long time.

II

DAYS, months passed, and the enamored Ibrahim could not resolve to leave the woman that he had seduced. The Countess grew more and more attached to him. Their son was being brought up in a distant province. The slanders of the world were beginning to subside, and the lovers began to enjoy greater tranquillity, silently remembering the past storm and endeavoring not to think of the future.

One day Ibrahim attended a levee at the Duke of Orleans' residence. The Duke, passing by him, stopped, and handing him a letter, told him to read it at his leisure. It was a letter from Peter the First. The Emperor, guessing the true cause of his absence, wrote to the Duke that he had no intention of compelling Ibrahim, that he left it to his own free will to return to Russia or not, but that in any case he would never abandon his former foster-child. This letter touched Ibrahim to the bottom of his heart. From that moment his lot was settled. The next day he informed the Regent of his intention to set out immediately for Russia.

"Consider what you are doing," said the Duke to him: "Russia is not your native country. I do not think that you will ever again see your torrid birthplace, but your long residence in France has made you equally a stranger to the climate and the ways of life of half-savage Russia. You were not born a subject of Peter. Listen to my advice: take advantage of his magnanimous permission, remain in France, for which you have already shed your blood, and rest assured that here your services and talents will not remain unrewarded."

Ibrahim thanked the Duke sincerely, but remained firm in his resolution.

"I am sorry," said the Regent: "but perhaps you are right."

He promised to let him retire from the French service and wrote a full account of the matter to the Czar.

Ibrahim was soon ready for the journey. He spent the evening before his departure at the house of the Countess D — , as usual. She knew nothing. Ibrahim had not the heart to inform her of his intention. The Countess was calm and cheerful. She several times called him to her and joked about his being so pensive. After supper the guests departed. The Countess, her husband, and Ibrahim were left alone in the parlor. The unhappy man would have given everything in the world to have been left alone with her; but Count D ——— seemed to have seated himself so comfortably beside the fire, that there was no hope of getting him out of the room. All three remained silent.

"*Bonne nuit!*" said the Countess at last.

Ibrahim's heart contracted and he suddenly felt all the horrors of parting. He stood motionless.

"*Bonne nuit, messieurs!*" repeated the Countess.

Still he remained motionless.... At last his eyes darkened, his head swam round, and he could scarcely walk out of the room. On reaching home, he

wrote, almost unconsciously, the following letter:

"I am going away, dear Leonora; I am leaving you forever. I am writing to you, because I have not the strength to tell it to you otherwise.

"My happiness could not last: I have enjoyed it in spite of fate and nature. You were bound to stop loving me; the enchantment was bound to vanish. This thought has always pursued me, even in those moments when I have seemed to forget everything, when at your feet I have been intoxicated by your passionate self-denial, by your unbounded tenderness.... The frivolous world unmercifully persecutes in fact that which it permits in theory; its cold mockery sooner or later would have vanquished you, would have humbled your ardent soul, and at last you would have become ashamed of your passion.... What would then have become of me? No, it is better to die, better to leave you before that terrible moment.

"Your peace is dearer to me than anything: you could not enjoy it while the eyes of the world were fixed upon us. Recall all that you have suffered, all the insults to your amour propre, all the tortures of fear; remember the terrible birth of our son. Think: ought I to expose you any longer to such agitations and dangers? Why should I endeavor to unite the fate of such a tender, beautiful creature to the miserable fate of a Negro, of a pitiable creature, scarce worthy of the name of man?

"Farewell, Leonora; farewell, my dear and only friend. I am leaving you, I am leaving the first and last joy of my life. I have neither fatherland nor kindred; I am going to gloomy Russia, where my utter solitude will be a consolation to me. Serious work, to which from now on I shall devote myself, will at least divert me from, if not stifle, painful recollections of the days of rapture and bliss.... Farewell, Leonora! I tear myself away from this letter, as if from your embrace. Farewell, be happy, and think sometimes of the poor Negro, of your faithful Ibrahim."

That same night he set out for Russia.

The journey did not seem to him as terrible as he had expected. His imagination triumphed over the reality. The farther he got from Paris, the more vivid and nearer rose up before him the objects he was leaving forever.

Before he was aware of it he found himself at the Russian frontier. Autumn had already set in, but the coachmen, in spite of the bad state of the roads, drove him with the speed of the wind, and on the seventeenth day of his journey he arrived at Krasnoe Selo, through which at that time the high road passed.

It was still a distance of twenty-eight versts to Petersburg. While the horses were being hitched up, Ibrahim entered the post-house. In a corner, a tall man, in a green *caftan* and with a clay pipe in his mouth, his elbows upon the table, was reading the Hamburg newspapers. Hearing somebody enter, he raised his head.

“Ah, Ibrahim!” he exclaimed, rising from the bench. “How do you do, godson?”

Ibrahim recognized Peter, and in his delight was about to rush toward him, but he respectfully paused. The Emperor approached, embraced him and kissed him upon the head.

“I was informed of your coming,” said Peter, “and set off to meet you. I have been waiting for you here since yesterday.”

Ibrahim could not find words to express his gratitude.

“Let your carriage follow on behind us,” continued the Emperor, “and you take your place by my side and ride along with me.”

The Czar’s carriage was driven up; he took his seat with Ibrahim, and they set off at a gallop. In about an hour and a half they reached Petersburg. Ibrahim gazed with curiosity at the new-born city which was springing up out of the marsh at the beck of the autocrat. Bare dams, canals without embankments, wooden bridges everywhere testified to the recent triumph of the human will over the hostile elements. The houses seemed to have been built in a hurry. In the whole town there was nothing magnificent but the Neva, not yet ornamented with its granite frame, but already covered with warships and merchant vessels. The imperial carriage stopped at the palace, the so-called Czarina’s Garden. On the steps Peter was met by a woman of about thirty-five years of age, handsome, and dressed in the latest Parisian fashion. Peter kissed her on the lips and, taking Ibrahim by the hand, said:

“Do you recognize my godson, Katinka? I beg you to treat him as kindly as you used to.”

Catherine fixed on him her dark piercing eyes, and stretched out her hand to him in a friendly manner. Two young beauties, tall, slender, and fresh as roses, stood behind her and respectfully approached Peter.

“Liza,” said he to one of them, “do you remember the little Negro who stole my apples for you at Oranienbaum? Here he is; let me introduce him to you.”

The Grand Duchess laughed and blushed. They went into the dining-room. In expectation of the Czar the table had been laid. Peter sat down to dinner with all his family, and invited Ibrahim to sit down with them. During dinner the Emperor conversed with him on various subjects, questioned him about the Spanish war, the internal affairs of France, and the Regent, whom he liked, although he condemned much in him. Ibrahim possessed an exact and observant mind. Peter was very pleased with his replies. He recalled to mind some features of Ibrahim’s childhood, and related them with such good-humor and gaiety, that nobody could have suspected this kind and hospitable host to be the hero of Poltava, the dread and mighty reformer of Russia.

After dinner the Emperor, according to the Russian custom, retired to rest. Ibrahim remained with the Empress and the Grand Duchesses. He tried to satisfy their curiosity, described the Parisian way of life, the holidays that were kept there, and the changeable fashions. In the meantime, some of the

persons belonging to the Emperor's suite had assembled in the palace. Ibrahim recognized the magnificent Prince Menshikov, who, seeing the Negro conversing with Catherine, cast an arrogant glance at him; Prince Jacob Dolgoruky, Peter's stern counselor; the learned Bruce, who had acquired among the people the name of the "Russian Faust"; the young Raguzinsky, his former companion, and others who had come to make their reports to the Emperor and to receive his orders.

In about two hours' time the Emperor appeared. "Let us see," said he to Ibrahim, "if you have forgotten your old duties. Take a slate and follow me." Peter shut himself up in his turnery and busied himself with state affairs. He worked in turns with Bruce, with Prince Dolgoruky, and with the chief of police, General Devier, and dictated to Ibrahim several ukases and decisions. Ibrahim could not sufficiently admire the quickness and firmness of his understanding, the strength and flexibility of his powers of attention, and the variety of his occupations. When the work was finished, Peter drew out a notebook in order to see if all that he had proposed to do that day had been accomplished. Then, issuing from the work-room, he said to Ibrahim:

"It is late; no doubt you are tired — sleep here tonight, as you used to do in the old days; tomorrow I will wake you."

Ibrahim, on being left alone, could hardly collect his thoughts. He was in Petersburg; he saw again the great man, near whom, not yet knowing his worth, he had passed his childhood. Almost with regret he confessed to himself that the Countess D — , for the first time since their separation, had not been his sole thought during the whole of the day. He saw that the new mode of life which awaited him — the activity and constant occupation — would revive his soul, wearied by passion, idleness and secret grief. The thought of being a great man's co-worker and, together with him, influencing the fate of a great nation, aroused within him for the first time the noble feeling of ambition. In this disposition of mind he lay down upon the camp bed prepared for him, and then the usual dreams carried him back to far-off Paris, to the arms of his dear Countess.

III

THE NEXT morning, Peter, according to his promise, woke Ibrahim and congratulated him on his elevation to the rank of Captain-lieutenant of the Artillery company of the Preobrazhensky Regiment, in which he himself was Captain. The courtiers surrounded Ibrahim, each in his way trying to be attentive to the new favorite. The haughty Prince Menshikov pressed his hand in a friendly manner; Sheremetyev inquired after his Parisian acquaintances, and Golovin invited him to dinner. Others followed the example of the latter, so that Ibrahim received enough invitations to last him at least a whole month.

Ibrahim now began to lead a monotonous but busy life, consequently he did not feel at all dull. From day to day he became more attached to the Emperor, and was better able to comprehend his lofty soul. To follow the thoughts of a great man is a most absorbing study. Ibrahim saw Peter in the Senate arguing weighty questions of legislation with Buturlin and Dolgoruky; with the Admiralty committee establishing the naval power of Russia; he saw him with Feofan, Gavriil Buzhinsky, and Kopievich, in his free hours examining translations of foreign authors, or visiting the factory of a merchant, the workshop of a mechanic, or the study of a savant. Russia presented to Ibrahim the appearance of a huge workshop, where machines alone move, where each workman, subject to established rules, is occupied with his own particular business. He, too, felt obliged to work at his own bench, and he endeavored to regret as little as possible the gaieties of his Parisian life. But it was more difficult for him to drive from his mind another and dear memory: he often thought of the Countess D — , and pictured to himself her just indignation, her tears and her despondency.... But sometimes a terrible thought oppressed his heart: the distractions of the great world, a new tie, another favorite — he shuddered; jealousy began to set his African blood boiling, and hot tears were ready to roll down his black face.

One morning he was sitting in his study, surrounded by business papers, when suddenly he heard a loud greeting in French. Ibrahim turned round quickly, and young Korsakov, whom he had left in Paris in the whirl of the great world, embraced him with joyful exclamations.

"I have only just arrived," said Korsakov, "and I have come straight to you. All our Parisian acquaintances send their greetings to you, and regret your absence. The Countess D — ordered me to summon you to return without fail, and here is her letter to you."

Ibrahim seized it with a trembling hand and looked at the familiar handwriting of the address, not daring to believe his eyes.

"How glad I am," continued Korsakov, "that you have not yet died of ennui in this barbarous Petersburg! What do people do here? How do they occupy themselves? Who is your tailor? Have you opera, at least?"

Ibrahim absently replied that probably the Emperor was just then at work in the dockyard.

Korsakov laughed.

"I see," said he, "that you can't attend to me just now; some other time we will talk to our heart's content; I will go now and pay my respects to the Emperor."

With these words he turned on his heel and hastened out of the room.

Ibrahim, left alone, hastily opened the letter. The Countess tenderly complained to him, reproaching him with dissimulation and distrust.

"You say," wrote she, "that my peace is dearer to you than everything in the world. Ibrahim, if this were the truth, would you have brought me to the condition to which I was reduced by the unexpected news of your departure? You were afraid that I might have detained you. Be assured that, in spite of my love, I should have known how to sacrifice it for your happiness and for what you consider your duty."

The Countess ended the letter with passionate assurances of love, and implored him to write to her, if only now and then, even though there should be no hope of their ever seeing each other again.

Ibrahim read this letter through twenty times, kissing the priceless lines with rapture. He was burning with impatience to hear something about the Countess, and he was just preparing to set out for the Admiralty, hoping to find Korsakov still there, when the door opened, and Korsakov himself appeared once more. He had already paid his respects to the Emperor, and as was usual with him, he seemed very well satisfied with himself.

"*Entre nous*" he said to Ibrahim, "the Emperor is a very strange person. Just fancy, I found him in a sort of linen singlet, on the mast of a new ship, whither I was compelled to climb with my dispatches. I stood on the rope ladder, and had not sufficient room to make a suitable bow, and so I became completely confused, a thing that had never happened to me in my life before. However, when the Emperor had read my letter, he looked at me from head to foot, and no doubt was agreeably struck by the taste and smartness of my attire; at any rate he smiled and invited me to tonight's assembly. But I am a perfect stranger in Petersburg; in the six years that I have been away I have quite forgotten the local customs; pray be my mentor; call for me and introduce me."

Ibrahim agreed to do so, and hastened to turn the conversation to a subject that was more interesting to him.

"Well, and how is the Countess D--?"

"The Countess? Of course, at first she was very much grieved on account of your departure; then, of course, little by little, she found solace and took a new lover: do you know whom? The lanky Marquis R ——— . Why are you staring at me so with your Negro eyes? Or does it seem strange to you? Don't you know that lasting grief is not in human nature, particularly in feminine nature? Chew on this, while I go and rest after my journey, and don't forget to come and call for me." What feelings filled the soul of Ibrahim? Jealousy? Rage? Despair? No, but a deep, oppressing

despondency. He repeated to himself: "I foresaw it, it had to happen." Then he opened the Countess's letter, read it again, hung his head and wept bitterly. He wept for a long time. The tears relieved his heart. Looking at the clock, he perceived that it was time to set out. Ibrahim would have been very glad to stay away, but the assembly was a matter of duty, and the Emperor strictly demanded the presence of his retainers. He dressed himself and started out to call for Korsakov.

Korsakov was sitting in his dressing-gown, reading a French book.

"So early?" he said to Ibrahim, on seeing him. "Mercy," the latter replied; "it is already half-past five, we shall be late; make haste and dress and let us go."

Korsakov, in a flurry, rang the bell with all his might; the servants came running in, and he began hastily to dress himself. His French valet gave him shoes with red heels, blue velvet breeches, and a pink *caftan* embroidered with spangles. His peruke was hurriedly powdered in the ante-chamber and brought in to him. Korsakov stuck his cropped head into it, asked for his sword and gloves, turned round about ten times before the glass, and then informed Ibrahim that he was ready. The footmen handed them their bearskin greatcoats, and they set out for the Winter Palace.

Korsakov overwhelmed Ibrahim with questions: Who was the greatest beauty in Petersburg? Who was supposed to be the best dancer? Which dance was just then the rage? Ibrahim very reluctantly gratified his curiosity. Meanwhile they reached the palace. A great number of long sledges, old-fashioned carriages, and gilded coaches already stood on the lawn. Near the steps were crowded liveried and mustachioed coachmen; messengers resplendent in tinsel and plumes, and bearing maces; hussars, pages, and clumsy footmen loaded with the coats and muffs of their masters — a retinue indispensable according to the notions of the gentry of that time. At the sight of Ibrahim, a general murmur arose: "The Negro, the Negro, the Czar's Negro!" He hurriedly conducted Korsakov through this motley crowd. The Court lackey opened the doors wide, and they entered the hall. Korsakov was dumbfounded.... In a large room, illuminated by tallow candles, which burnt dimly amidst clouds of tobacco smoke, magnates with blue ribbons across the shoulders, ambassadors, foreign merchants, officers of the Guards in green uniforms, ship-masters in jackets and striped trousers, moved backwards and forwards in crowds to the uninterrupted sound of the music of wind instruments. The ladies sat against the walls, the young ones being decked out in all the splendor of the prevailing fashion. Gold and silver glittered upon their gowns; out of sumptuous farthingales their slender forms rose like flower stalks; diamonds sparkled in their ears, in their long curls, and around their necks. They turned gaily about to the right and to the left, waiting for their cavaliers and for the dancing to begin. The elderly ladies craftily endeavored to combine the new fashions with the proscribed style of the past; their caps resembled the sable head-dress of the Czarina Natalya Kirilovna, and their gowns and capes recalled the *sarafan* and *dushegreika*?

They seemed to attend these newfangled gatherings with more astonishment than pleasure, and cast looks of resentment at the wives and daughters of the Dutch skippers, who, in dimity skirts and red bodices, knitted their stockings and laughed and chatted among themselves as if they were at home.

Korsakov was completely bewildered. Observing new arrivals, a servant approached them with beer and glasses on a tray.

"Que diable est ce que tout cela?" he asked Ibrahim in a whisper.

Ibrahim could not repress a smile. The Empress and the Grand Duchesses, dazzling in their beauty and their attire, walked through the rows of guests, conversing affably with them. The Emperor was in another room. Korsakov, wishing to show himself to him, with difficulty succeeded in pushing his way thither through the constantly moving crowd. In this room were chiefly foreigners, solemnly smoking their clay pipes and draining earthenware mugs. On the tables were bottles of beer and wine, leather pouches with tobacco, glasses of punch, and some chessboards.

At one of these Peter was playing draughts with a broad-shouldered skipper. They zealously saluted one another with whiffs of tobacco smoke, and the Emperor was so puzzled by an unexpected move that had been made by his opponent, that he did not notice Korsakov, in spite of the latter's efforts to call attention to himself. Just then a stout gentleman, with a large bouquet upon his breast, fussily entered the room, announced in a loud voice that the dancing had commenced, and immediately retired. A large number of the guests followed him, Korsakov among them.

An unexpected sight filled him with astonishment. Along the whole length of the ball-room, to the sound of the most wretched music, the ladies and gentlemen stood in two rows facing each other; the gentlemen bowed low, the ladies curtsied still lower, first forward, then to the right, then to the left, then again forward, again to the right, and so on. Korsakov, gazing at this peculiar pastime, opened his eyes wide and bit his lips. The curtseying and bowing continued for about half an hour; at last they ceased, and the stout gentleman with the bouquet announced that the ceremonial dances were ended, and ordered the musicians to play a minuet. Korsakov rejoiced, and prepared to shine. Among the young ladies was one in particular whom he was greatly charmed with. She was about sixteen years of age, was richly dressed, but with taste, and sat near an elderly gentleman of stern and dignified appearance. Korsakov approached her and asked her to do him the honor of dancing with him. The young beauty looked at him in confusion, and did not seem to know what to say to him. The gentleman sitting near her frowned still more. Korsakov awaited her decision, but the gentleman with the bouquet came up to him, led him to the middle of the room, and said in a pompous manner:

"Sir, you have done wrong. In the first place, you approached this young person without making the three necessary bows to her, and in the second place, you took upon yourself to choose her, whereas, in the minuet that right belongs to the lady, and not to the gentleman. On that account you

must be severely punished, that is to say, you must drain the goblet of the Great Eagle.”

Korsakov grew more and more astonished. In a moment the guests surrounded him, loudly demanding the immediate payment of the penalty. Peter, hearing the laughter and the shouting, came out of the adjoining room, as he was very fond of being present in person at such punishments. The crowd divided before him, and he entered the circle, where stood the culprit and before him the marshal of the assembly holding in his hands a huge goblet filled with malmsey. He was trying in vain to persuade the offender to comply willingly with the law.

“Aha!” said Peter, seeing Korsakov: “you are caught, brother. Come now, monsieur, drink and don’t make faces.”

There was no help for it: the poor fop, without pausing to take breath, drained the goblet and returned it to the marshal.

“Look here, Korsakov,” said Peter to him: “those breeches of yours are of velvet, such as I myself do not wear, and I am far richer than you. That is extravagance; take care that I do not fall out with you.” Hearing this reprimand, Korsakov wished to make his way out of the circle, but he staggered and almost fell, to the indescribable delight of the Emperor and the whole merry company. This episode not only did not spoil the harmony and interest of the principal performance, but even enlivened it. The gentlemen began to scrape and bow, and the ladies to curtsy and clap their heels together with great zeal, and out of time with the music. Korsakov could not take part in the general gaiety. The lady whom he had chosen approached Ibrahim, at the command of her father, Gavril Afanasyevich Rzhevsky, and, dropping her blue eyes, timidly gave him her hand. Ibrahim danced the minuet with her and led her back to her former place, then sought out Korsakov, led him out of the ballroom, placed him in the carriage and drove him home. On the way Korsakov began to mutter indistinctly: “Accursed assembly!... accursed goblet of the Great Eagle!”... but he soon fell into a sound sleep, and knew not how he reached home, nor how he was undressed and put into bed: and he awoke the next day with a headache, and with a dim recollection of the scraping, the curtseying, the tobacco smoke, the gentleman with the bouquet, and the goblet of the Great Eagle.

IV

I MUST now introduce the gracious reader to Gavril Afanasyevich Rzhevsky. He was descended from an ancient noble family, possessed vast estates, was hospitable, loved falconry, and had a large number of domestics — in a word, he was a genuine Russian gentleman. To use his own expression, he could not endure the German spirit, and he endeavored to preserve in his home the ancient customs that were so dear to him. His daughter was seventeen years old. She had lost her mother while she was yet a child. She had been brought up in the old style, that is to say, she was surrounded by governesses, nurses, playmates, and maidservants, was able to embroider in gold, and could neither read nor write. Her father, notwithstanding his dislike of everything foreign, could not oppose her wish to learn German dances from a captive Swedish officer, living in their house. This deserving dancing-master was about fifty years of age; his right foot had been shot through at Narva, and consequently it was not capable of performing minuets and courantes, but the left executed with wonderful ease and agility the most difficult steps. His pupil did honor to his efforts. Natalya Gavrilovna was celebrated for being the best dancer at the assemblies, and this was partly the cause of Korsakov's transgression. He came the next day to apologize to Gavril Afanasyevich; but the grace and elegance of the young fop did not find favor in the eyes of the proud boyar, who wittily nicknamed him the French monkey.

It was a holiday. Gavril Afanasyevich expected some relatives and friends. In the ancient hall a long table was being laid. The guests were arriving with their wives and daughters, who had at last been set free from domestic imprisonment by the decree of the Emperor and by his own example. Natalya Gavrilovna carried round to each guest a silver tray laden with golden cups, and each man, as he drained his, regretted that the kiss, which it was customary to receive on such occasions in the olden times, had gone out of fashion.

They sat down to table. In the place of honor, next to the host, sat his father-in-law, Prince Boris Alexeyevich Lykov, a boyar of seventy years of age; the other guests ranged themselves according to the rank of their family, thus recalling the happy times when rules of precedence were generally respected. The men sat on one side, the women on the other. At the end of the table, the housekeeper in her old-fashioned jacket and head-dress, the dwarf, a thirty-year-old midget, prim and wrinkled, and the captive Swede, in his faded blue uniform, occupied their accustomed places. The table, which was loaded with a large number of dishes, was surrounded by an anxious crowd of domestics, among whom the butler was prominent, thanks to his severe look, big paunch and stately immobility. The first few minutes of the dinner were devoted entirely to the products of our old-fashioned cuisine; the noise of plates and the rattling of spoons alone disturbed the general silence. At last the host, seeing that the time had

arrived for amusing the guests with agreeable conversation, turned round and asked:

"But where is Yekimovna? Call her here."

Several servants were about to rush off in different directions, but at that moment an old woman, powdered and rouged, decked out in flowers and tinsel, in a low-necked silk gown, entered, singing and dancing. All were pleased to see her.

"Good-day, Yekimovna," said Prince Lykov: "how are you?"

"Quite well and happy, gossip: still singing and dancing and looking out for suitors."

"Where have you been, fool?" asked the host.

"Decking myself out, gossip, for our dear guests, for this holy day, by the order of the Czar, at the command of the boyar, in the German style, to make you all smile."

At these words there was a loud burst of laughter, and the fool took her place behind the host's chair.

"The fool talks nonsense, but sometimes speaks the truth," said Tatyana Afanasyevna, the eldest sister of the host, for whom he entertained great respect. "Truly, the present fashions are something for all to laugh at. Since you, gentlemen, have shaved off your beards and put on short *caftans*, it is, of course, useless to talk about women's rags, but it is really a pity about the *sarafan*, the girls' ribbon, and the *povoinikj*. It is pitiable and at the same time laughable, to see the belles of today: their hair fluffed up like tow, greased and covered with French flour; their stomachs laced so tightly that they almost break in two; their petticoats are stretched on hoops, so that they have to enter a carriage sideways, and to go through a door they have to stoop; they can neither stand, nor sit, nor breathe — real martyrs, the darlings!"

"Oh, my dear Tatyana Afanasyevna!" said Kirila Petrovich T — , a former Governor of Ryazan, where he had acquired three thousand serfs and a young wife, both by somewhat shady means, "as far as I am concerned, my wife may dress as she pleases, she may get herself up like a blowsy peasant woman or like the Chinese Emperor, provided that she does not order new dresses every month and throw away the outmoded ones that are nearly new. In former times the grandmother's *sarafan* formed part of the granddaughter's dowry, but nowadays all that is changed: the dress, that the mistress wears today, you will see the servant wearing tomorrow. What is to be done? It is the ruin of the Russian nobility; it's a calamity!"

At these words he sighed and looked at his Marya Ilyinishna, who did not seem at all to like either his praises of the past or his disparagement of the latest customs. The other young ladies shared her displeasure, but they remained silent, for modesty was then considered an indispensable attribute of a young woman.

"And who is to blame?" said Gavril Afanasyevich, filling a tankard with foaming kvass. "Isn't it our own fault? The young women play the fool, and we encourage them."

“But what can we do, when our wishes are not consulted?” retorted Kirila Petrovich. “One would be glad to shut his wife up in the women’s rooms, but with beating of drums she is summoned to appear at the assemblies. The husband goes after the whip, but the wife after frippery. Oh, those assemblies! The Lord has visited us with this punishment for our sins.”

Marya Ilyinishna sat as if on needles and pins; her tongue itched to speak. At last she could restrain herself no longer, and turning to her husband, she asked him with an acid smile, what he found wrong in the assemblies.

“This is what I find wrong in them,” replied the husband heatedly: “since they began, husbands have been unable to manage their wives; wives have forgotten the words of the Apostle: ‘Let the wife see that she reverence her husband’; they no longer busy themselves about their households, but about finery; they do not think of how to please their husbands, but how to attract the attention of giddy officers. And is it becoming, madam, for a Russian lady to associate with tobacco-smoking Germans and their charwomen? And was ever such a thing heard of, as dancing and talking with young men till far into the night? It would be all very well if it were with relatives, but with outsiders, with strangers, with people that they are totally unacquainted with!”

“I’ve a word for your ear, but the wolf is prowling near,” said Gavril Afanasyevich, frowning. “I confess that I too dislike these assemblies: before you know where you are, you knock into a drunken man, or are made drunk yourself to become the laughing-stock of others. Then you must keep your eyes open for fear that some good-for-nothing fellow might be up to mischief with your daughter; the young men nowadays are so utterly spoilt. Look, for example, at the son of the late Yevgraf Sergeyevich Korsakov, who at the last assembly made such commotion over Natasha, that it brought the blood to my cheeks. The next day I see somebody driving straight into my courtyard; I thought to myself, who in the name of Heaven is it, can it be Prince Alexander Danilovich? But no: it was Ivan Yevgrafovich! He could not stop at the gate and make his way on foot to the steps, not he! He flew in, bowing and chattering, the Lord preserve us! The fool Yekimovna mimics him very amusingly: by the way, fool, give us an imitation of the foreign monkey.”

The fool Yekimovna seized hold of a dish-cover, placed it under her arm like a hat, and began twisting, scraping, and bowing in every direction, repeating: “monsieur... mamselle... assemblée... pardon.” General and prolonged laughter again testified to the delight of the guests.

“The very spit of Korsakov,” said old Prince Lykov, wiping away the tears of laughter when quiet was again restored. “But why conceal the fact? He is not the first, nor will he be the last, who has returned from abroad to holy Russia a buffoon. What do our children learn there? To bow and scrape with their feet, to chatter God knows what gibberish, to treat their elders with disrespect, and to dangle after other men’s wives. Of all the

young people who have been educated abroad (the Lord forgive me!) the Czar's Negro most resembles a man."

"Of course," observed Gavril Afanasyevich: "he is a sober, decent man, not like that good-for-nothing... But who is it that has just driven through the gate into the courtyard? Surely it cannot be that foreign monkey again? Why do you stand gaping there, beasts?" he continued, turning to the servants: "run and tell him he won't be admitted, and in future..

"Old man, are you dreaming?" interrupted Yekimovna the fool, "or are you blind? It is the Emperor's sledge — the Czar has come."

Gavrila Afanasyevich rose hastily from the table; everybody rushed to the windows, and sure enough they saw the Emperor ascending the steps, leaning on his orderly's shoulder. There was great commotion. The host rushed to meet Peter; the servants ran hither and thither as if they had gone crazy; the guests became alarmed; some even thought how they might hasten home as quickly as possible. Suddenly the thundering voice of Peter resounded in the ante-room; all became silent, and the Czar entered, accompanied by his host, who was beside himself with joy.

"Good day, gentlemen!" said Peter, with a cheerful countenance.

All made a profound bow. The sharp eyes of the Czar sought out in the crowd the young daughter of the house; he called her to him. Natalya Gavrilovna advanced boldly enough, but she blushed not only to the ears but even to the shoulders.

"You grow prettier from hour to hour," the Emperor said to her, and as was his habit he kissed her on the head; then turning to the guests, he added: "I have disturbed you? You were dining? Pray sit down again, and give me some aniseed brandy, Gavril Afanasyevich."

The host rushed to the stately butler, snatched from his hand a tray, filled a golden goblet himself, and gave it with a bow to the Emperor. Peter drank the brandy, ate a biscuit, and for the second time requested the guests to continue their dinner. All resumed their former places, except the dwarf and the housekeeper, who did not dare to remain at a table honored by the presence of the Czar. Peter sat down by the side of the host and asked for cabbage soup. The Emperor's orderly handed him a wooden spoon mounted with ivory, and a knife and fork with green bone handles, for Peter never used any other table implements but his own. The dinner, which a moment before had been so noisy and merry, was now continued in silence and constraint. The host, in his delight and awe, ate nothing; the guests also stood upon ceremony and listened with respectful attention, as the Emperor spoke in German with the captive Swede about the campaign of 1701. The fool Yekimovna, several times questioned by the Emperor, replied with a sort of timid indifference, which, by the way, did not at all prove her natural stupidity. At last the dinner came to an end. The Emperor rose, and after him all the guests.

"Gavrila Afanasyevich!" he said to the host: "I must speak to you in private;" and, taking him by the arm, he led him into the parlor and locked the door. The guests remained in the dining-room, talking in whispers about

the unexpected visit, and, afraid of being indiscreet, they soon drove off one after another, without thanking the host for his hospitality. His father-in-law, daughter, and sister conducted them very quietly to the door, and remained alone in the dining-room, waiting for the Emperor to emerge.

V

HALF AN HOUR later the door opened and Peter issued forth. With a dignified inclination of the head he responded to the threefold bow of Prince Lykov, Tatyana Afanasyevna and Natasha, and walked straight out into the ante-room. The host handed him his red coat, conducted him to the sledge, and on the steps thanked him once more for the honor he had shown him.

Peter drove off.

Returning to the dining-room, Gavril Afanasyevich seemed very much troubled; he angrily ordered the servants to clear the table as quickly as possible, sent Natasha to her own room, and, informing his sister and father-in-law that he must talk with them, he led them into the bedroom, where he usually rested after dinner. The old Prince lay down upon the oak bed; Tatyana Afanasyevna sank into the old brocaded armchair, and placed her feet upon the footstool; Gavril Afanasyevich locked all the doors, sat down upon the bed at the feet of Prince Lykov, and in a low voice began:

"It was not for nothing that the Emperor paid me a visit today: guess what he wanted to talk to me about."

"How can we know, brother?" said Tatyana Afanasyevna.

"Has the Czar appointed you governor of some province?" said his father-in-law: — "it is high time that he did so. Or has he offered you an ambassador's post? Men of noble birth — not only plain clerks — are sent to foreign monarchs."

"No," replied his son-in-law, frowning. "I am a man of the old school, and our services nowadays are not in demand, although, perhaps, an orthodox Russian nobleman is worth more than these modern upstarts, pancake vendors and heathens. But this is a different matter altogether."

"Then what was it, brother?" said Tatyana Afanasyevna, "that he was talking with you about for such a long time? Can it be that you are in trouble? The Lord save and defend us!"

"Not exactly in trouble, but I confess that it is a matter for reflection."

"Then what is it, brother? What is it all about?"

"It is about Natasha: the Czar came to speak of a match for her."

"God be praised!" said Tatyana Afanasyevna, crossing herself. "The girl is of marriageable age, and as the matchmaker is, so must the bridegroom be. God give them love and counsel, the honor is great. For whom does the Czar ask her hand?"

"H'm!" exclaimed Gavril Afanasyevich: "for whom? That's just it — for whom!"

"Who is it, then?" repeated Prince Lykov, already beginning to doze off.

"Guess," said Gavril Afanasyevich.

"My dear brother," replied the old lady: "how can we guess? There are a great number of eligibles at Court, each of whom would be glad to take your Natasha for his wife. Is it Dolgoruky?"

"No, it is not Dolgoruky."

"It's just as well: he is much too conceited. Is it Shein? Troyekurov?"

"No, neither the one nor the other."

"I do not care for them either; they are flighty, and too much imbued with the German spirit. Well, is it Miloslavsky?"

"No, not he."

"It's just as well, he is rich and stupid. Who then? Yeletzky? Lvov? No? It cannot be Raguzinsky? I cannot think of anybody else. For whom, then, does the Czar intend Natasha?"

"For the Negro Ibrahim."

The old lady exclaimed, and struck her hands together. Prince Lykov raised his head from the pillow, and with astonishment repeated:

"For the Negro Ibrahim?"

"My dear brother!" said the old lady in a tearful voice: "do not ruin your own child, do not deliver poor little Natasha into the clutches of that black devil."

"But how," replied Gavril Afanasyevich: "can I refuse the Emperor, who promises in return to bestow his favor upon us and all our house?"

"What!" exclaimed the old Prince, who was now wide awake: "Natasha, my granddaughter, to be married to a bought Negro!"

"He is not of common birth," said Gavril Afanasyevich: "he is the son of a Negro Sultan. The Mussulmen took him prisoner and sold him in Constantinople, and our ambassador bought him and presented him to the Czar. The Negro's eldest brother came to Russia with a considerable ransom and —"

"My dear Gavril Afanasyevich!" interrupted the old lady, "we have heard the fairy tale about Prince Ievgeny and Yeruslan Lazarevich. Tell us rather what answers you made to the Emperor's proposal."

"I said that we were under his authority, and that it was our duty to obey him in all things."

At that moment a noise was heard behind the door. Gavril Afanasyevich went to open it, but felt some obstruction. He pushed it hard, the door opened, and they saw Natasha lying in a swoon upon the bloodstained floor.

Her heart had sunk within her, when the Emperor shut himself up with her father; some presentiment had whispered to her that the matter concerned her, and when Gavril Afanasyevich ordered her to withdraw, saying that he wished to speak to her aunt and grandfather, she could not resist the promptings of feminine curiosity, stole quietly along through the inner rooms to the bedroom door, and did not miss a single word of the whole terrible conversation; when she heard her father's last words, the poor girl lost consciousness, and falling, struck her head against an iron-bound chest, in which her dowry was kept.

The servants hastened to the spot; Natasha was lifted up, carried to her own room, and placed in bed. After a while she regained consciousness, opened her eyes, but recognized neither father nor aunt. A violent fever set

in; she spoke in her delirium about the Czar's Negro, about marriage, and suddenly cried in a plaintive and piercing voice:

"Valeryan, dear Valeryan, my life, save me! there they are, there they are..."

Tatyana Afanasyevna glanced uneasily at her brother, who turned pale, bit his lips, and silently left the room. He returned to the old Prince, who, unable to mount the stairs, had remained below.

"How is Natasha?" he asked.

"Very bad," replied the grieved father: "worse than I thought; she is delirious, and raves about Valeryan."

"Who is this Valeryan?" asked the anxious old man. "Can it be that orphan, the son of a *streletz*, whom you brought up in your house?"

"The same, to my misfortune!" replied Gavril Afanasyevich. "His father, at the time of the rebellion, saved my life, and the devil put it into my head to take the accursed wolf-cub into my house. When, two years ago, he was enrolled in the regiment at his own request, Natasha, on taking leave of him, shed bitter tears, and he stood as if petrified. This seemed suspicious to me, and I spoke about it to my sister. But since that time Natasha has never mentioned his name, and nothing whatever has been heard of him. I thought that she had forgotten him, but apparently this is not the case. It's settled: she shall marry the Negro." Prince Lykov did not contradict him: it would have been useless. He returned home; Tatyana Afanasyevna remained by the side of Natasha's bed; Gavril Afanasyevich, having sent for the doctor, locked himself in his room, and the house grew silent and gloomy.

The unexpected proposal astonished Ibrahim quite as much as Gavril Afanasyevich. This is how it hap-

pened. Peter, being engaged in business with Ibrahim, said to him:

"I perceive, my friend, that you are downhearted; speak frankly, what is it you want?"

Ibrahim assured the Emperor that he was very well satisfied with his lot, and wished for nothing better.

"Good," said the Emperor: "if you are dull without any cause, I know how to cheer you up."

At the conclusion of the work, Peter asked Ibrahim: "Do you like the young lady with whom you danced the minuet at the last assembly?"

"She is very charming, Your Majesty, and seems to be a good and modest girl."

"Then I shall take it upon myself to make you better acquainted with her. Would you like to marry her?"

"I, Your Majesty?"

"Listen, Ibrahim: you are a man alone in the world, without birth and kindred, a stranger to everybody, except myself. Were I to die today, what would become of you tomorrow, my poor Negro? You must get settled while there is yet time, find support in new ties, become connected by marriage with the Russian nobility."

“Your Majesty, I am happy under your protection, and in the possession of your favor. God grant that I may not survive my Czar and benefactor — I wish for nothing more; but even if I had any idea of getting married, would the young lady and her relations consent? My appearance — ”

“Your appearance? What nonsense! You are a capital fellow! A young girl must obey the will of her parents, and we will see what old Gavril Rzhnevsky will say, when I myself am your matchmaker.”

With these words the Emperor ordered his sledge, and left Ibrahim sunk in deep reflection.

“Get married?” thought the African: “why not?”

Am I to be condemned to pass my life in solitude, and not know the greatest pleasure and the most sacred duties of man, just because I was born in the torrid zone? I cannot hope to be loved: a childish objection! Is it possible to believe in love? Does it then exist in the frivolous heart of woman? As I have renounced for ever these sweet delusions, I choose other, more substantial attractions. The Emperor is right: I must think of my future. Marriage with the young Rzhnevsky girl will connect me with the proud Russian nobility, and I shall cease to be a sojourner in my new fatherland. From my wife I shall not require love: I shall be satisfied with her fidelity; and her friendship I will acquire by constant tenderness, confidence and indulgence.” Ibrahim, according to his usual custom, wished to occupy himself with work, but his imagination was too active. He left the papers and went for a stroll along the banks of the Neva. Suddenly he heard the voice of Peter; he looked round and saw the Emperor, who, having dismissed his sledge, advanced toward him with a beaming countenance.

“It is all settled, brother!” said Peter, taking him by the arm: “I have arranged your marriage. Tomorrow, go and visit your future father-in-law, but see that you humor his boyar pride: leave the sledge at the gate, go through the courtyard on foot, talk to him about his services and distinctions, and he will be perfectly charmed with you.... And now,” continued he, shaking his cudgel, “lead me to that rogue Danilych, with whom I must confer about his recent pranks.” Ibrahim thanked Peter heartily for his fatherly solicitude on his account, accompanied him as far as the magnificent palace of Prince Menshikov, and then returned home.

VI

A LAMP shed a soft light on the glass case in which glittered the gold and silver mountings of the old family ikons. The flickering light faintly illuminated the curtained bed and the little table set out with labeled medicine-bottles. Near the stove sat a servant-maid at her spinning-wheel, and the subdued noise of the spindle was the only sound that broke the silence of the room.

"Who is there?" asked a feeble voice.

The servant-maid rose immediately, approached the bed, and gently raised the curtain.

"Will it soon be daylight?" asked Natalya.

"It is already midday," replied the maid.

"Oh, Lord! and why is it so dark?"

"The curtains are drawn, miss."

"Help me to dress quickly."

"You must not do so, miss; the doctor has forbidden it."

"Am I ill then? How long have I been this way?"

"About a fortnight."

"Is it possible? And it seems to me as if it were only yesterday that I went to bed...."

Natasha became silent; she tried to collect her scattered thoughts. Something had happened to her, but what it was she could not exactly remember. The maid stood before her, awaiting her orders. At that moment a dull noise was heard below.

"What is that?" asked the invalid.

"The gentlemen have finished dinner," replied the maid: "they are rising from the table. Tatyana Afanasyevna will be here presently."

Natasha seemed pleased at this; she waved her feeble hand. The maid drew the curtain and seated herself again at the spinning-wheel.

A few minutes afterwards, a head in a broad white cap with dark ribbons appeared in the doorway and asked in a low voice:

"How is Natasha?"

"How do you do, auntie?" said the invalid in a faint voice, and Tatyana Afanasyevna hastened toward her.

"The young lady has come to," said the maid, carefully drawing a chair to the side of the bed. The old lady, with tears in her eyes, kissed the pale, languid face of her niece, and sat down beside her. Just behind her came a German doctor in a black *caftan* and the wig worn by the learned. He felt Natasha's pulse, and announced in Latin, and then in Russian, that the danger was over. He asked for paper and ink, wrote out a new prescription, and departed. The old lady rose, kissed Natalya once more, and immediately hurried down with the good news to Gavril Afanasyevich.

The Czar's Negro, in uniform, wearing his sword and carrying his hat in his hand, sat in the drawingroom with Gavril Afanasyevich. Korsakov,

stretched out upon a soft couch, was listening to their conversation, and teasing a venerable greyhound. Becoming tired of this occupation, he approached the mirror, the usual refuge of the idle, and in it he saw Tatyana Afanasyevna, who through the doorway was vainly signaling to her brother.

"Someone is calling you, Gavril Afanasyevich," said Korsakov, turning round to him and interrupting Ibrahim's speech.

Gavril Afanasyevich immediately went to his sister and closed the door behind him.

"I am astonished at your patience," said Korsakov to Ibrahim. "For a full hour you have been listening to a lot of nonsense about the antiquity of the Lykov and Rzhevsky lineage, and have even added your own moral observations! In your place *j'aurais planté la* the old liar and his whole tribe, including Natalya Gavrilovna, who puts on airs, and is only pretending to be ill — *une petite santé*. Tell me candidly: are you really in love with this little *mijaurée*?"

"No," replied Ibrahim, "I am not going to marry for love, I am going to make a marriage of convenience, and then only if she has no decided aversion to me."

"Listen, Ibrahim," said Korsakov, "follow my advice this time; in truth, I am more sensible than I seem. Get this foolish idea out of your head — don't marry. It seems to me that your bride has no particular liking for you. Don't all sorts of things happen in this world? For instance: I am certainly not a bad-looking fellow myself, and yet it has happened to me to deceive husbands, who, Lord knows, were in no way worse-looking than me. And you yourself... do you remember our Parisian friend, Count D — ? There is no dependence to be placed upon a woman's fidelity; happy is he who can regard it with indifference. But you!

... With your passionate, pensive and suspicious nature, with your flat nose, thick lips, and coarse wool, to rush into all the dangers of matrimony!..."

"I thank you for your friendly advice," interrupted Ibrahim coldly; "but you know the proverb: It is not your duty to rock other people's children."

"Take care, Ibrahim," replied Korsakov, laughing, "that you are not called upon some day to prove the truth of that proverb in the literal sense of the word." Meanwhile the conversation in the next room became very heated.

"You will kill her," the old lady was saying: "she cannot bear the sight of him."

"But judge for yourself," replied her obstinate brother. "For a fortnight he has been coming here as her bridegroom, and during that time he has not once seen his bride. He may think at last that her illness is a mere invention, and that we are only seeking to gain time in order to rid ourselves of him in some way. And what will the Czar say? He has already sent three times to ask after the health of Natalya. Do as you like, but I have no intention of quarreling with him."

“Good Lord!” said Tatyana Afanasyevna: “what will become of the poor child! At least let me go and prepare her for such a visit.”

Gavrila Afanasyevich consented, and then returned to the parlor.

“Thank God!” said he to Ibrahim: “the danger is over. Natalya is much better. Were it not that I do not like to leave my dear guest Ivan Yeografovich here alone, I would take you upstairs to have a glimpse of your bride.”

Korsakov congratulated Gavrila Afanasyevich, asked him not to be uneasy on his account, assured him that he was compelled to go at once, and rushed out into the hall, without allowing his host to accompany him.

Meanwhile Tatyana Afanasyevna hastened to prepare the invalid for the appearance of the terrible guest. Entering the room, she sat down breathless by the side of the bed, and took Natasha by the hand; but before she was able to utter a word, the door opened.

Natasha asked: “Who has come in?”

The old lady turned faint. Gavrila Afanasyevich drew back the curtain, looked coldly at the sick girl, and asked how she was. The invalid wanted to smile at him, but could not. Her father’s stern look struck her, and uneasiness took possession of her. At that moment it seemed to her that someone was standing at the head of her bed. She raised her head with an effort and suddenly recognized the Czar’s Negro. Then she remembered everything, and all the horror of the future presented itself to her. But she was too exhausted to be perceptibly shocked. Natasha laid her head down again upon the pillow and closed her eyes... her heart beat painfully. Tatyana Afanasyevna made a sign to her brother that the invalid wanted to go to sleep, and all quitted the room very quietly, except the maid, who resumed her seat at the spinning-wheel.

The unhappy girl opened her eyes, and no longer seeing anybody by her bedside, called the maid and sent her for the dwarf. But at that moment a round, old figure rolled up to her bed, like a ball. Lastochka (for so the dwarf was called) with all the speed of her short legs had followed Gavrila Afanasyevich and Ibrahim up the stairs, and concealed herself behind the door, in accordance with the promptings of that curiosity which is inborn in the fair sex. Natasha, seeing her, sent the maid away, and the dwarf sat down upon a stool by the bedside.

Never had so small a body contained within itself so much energy. She meddled in everything, knew everything, and busied herself about everything. By cunning and insinuating ways she had succeeded in gaining the love of her masters, and the hatred of all the household, which she controlled in the most autocratic manner. Gavrila Afanasyevich listened to her tale-bearing, complaints, and petty requests. Tatyana Afanasyevna constantly asked her opinion, and followed her advice, and Natasha had the most unbounded affection for her, and confided to her all the thoughts, all the emotions of her sixteen-year-old heart.

“Do you know, Lastochka,” said she, “my father is going to marry me to the Negro.”

The dwarf sighed deeply, and her wrinkled face became still more wrinkled.

“Is there no hope?” continued Natasha: “will my father not take pity upon me?”

The dwarf shook her cap.

“Will not my grandfather or my aunt intercede for me?”

“No, miss; during your illness the Negro succeeded in bewitching everybody. The master dotes upon him, the Prince raves about him alone, and Tatyana Afanasyevna says it is a pity that he is a Negro, as a better bridegroom we could not wish for.”

“My God, my God!” moaned poor Natasha.

“Do not grieve, my pretty one,” said the dwarf, kissing her feeble hand. “If you are to marry the Negro, you will have your own way in everything. Nowadays it is not as it was in the olden times: husbands no longer keep their wives under lock and key; they say the Negro is rich; you will have a splendid house — you will lead a merry life.”

“Poor Valeryan!” said Natasha, but so softly, that the dwarf could only guess what she said, rather than hear the words.

“That is just it, miss,” said she, mysteriously lowering her voice; “if you thought less of the *streletz* orphan, you would not rave about him in your delirium and your father would not be angry.”

“What!” said the alarmed Natasha: “I have raved about Valeryan? And my father heard it? And my father is angry?”

“That is just the trouble,” replied the dwarf. “Now, if you were to ask him not to marry you to the Negro, he would think that Valeryan was the cause. There is nothing to be done; submit to the will of your parents, for what is to be, will be.”

Natasha did not reply. The thought that the secret of her heart was known to her father, produced a powerful effect upon her imagination. One hope alone remained to her: to die before the consummation of the odious marriage. This thought consoled her. Weak and sad at heart she resigned herself to her fate.

VII

IN THE house of Gavril Afanasyevich, to the right of the vestibule, was a narrow room with one window. In it stood a simple bed covered with a woolen counterpane; in front of the bed was a small deal table, on which a tallow candle was burning, and some sheets of music lay open. On the wall hung an old blue uniform and its contemporary, a three-cornered hat; above it, fastened by three nails, was a cheap print representing Charles XII. on horseback. The notes of a flute resounded through this humble abode. The captive dancing-master, its lonely occupant, in a night-cap and nankeen dressing-gown, was relieving the tedium of a winter evening, by playing some old Swedish marches which reminded him of the gay days of his youth. After devoting two whole hours to this exercise, the Swede took his flute to pieces, placed it in a box, and began to undress....

Just then the latch of his door was lifted and a tall, handsome young man, in uniform, entered the room. The Swede rose, surprised.

"You do not recognize me, Gustav Adamych," said the young visitor in a moved voice. "You do not remember the boy to whom you used to give military instruction, and with whom you nearly started a fire in this very room, shooting off a toy cannon."

Gustav Adamych looked closely....

"Eh, eh," he cried at last, embracing him: "Greetings! How long have you been here? Sit down, you scapegrace, let US talk."

MARIE



Translated by Marie H. de Zielinska

This novella was first published in 1831, shortly after Pushkin's marriage to Natalya Goncharova, who came from a family of paper manufacturers from Kaluga. She was an attractive and popular young lady and Pushkin's joy at the time is emphasised by the charming nature of this tale. Termed by Pushkin as a 'Northern story', *Marie* conveys a picture of garrison life on the Russian plains, among picturesque scenery and the rustic and semi-barbarous backdrop of Kalmouk and the Cossacks.



Pushkin's wife, 1831

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I. THE SERGEANT OF THE GUARDS.

My father, Andrew Peter Grineff, having served in his youth under Count Munich, left the army in 17 — , with the grade of First Major. From that time he lived on his estate in the Principality of Simbirsk, where he married Avoditia, daughter of a poor noble in the neighborhood. Of nine children, the issue of this marriage, I was the only survivor. My brothers and sisters died in childhood.

Through the favor of a near relative of ours, Prince B — -, himself a Major in the Guards, I was enrolled Sergeant of the Guards in the regiment of Semenofski. It was understood that I was on furlough till my education should be finished. From my fifth year I was confided to the care of an old servant Saveliitch, whose steadiness promoted him to the rank of my personal attendant. Thanks to his care, when I was twelve years of age I knew how to read and write, and could make a correct estimate of the points of a hunting dog.

At this time, to complete my education, my father engaged upon a salary a Frenchman, M. Beaupre, who was brought from Moscow with one year's provision of wine and oil from Provence. His arrival of course displeased Saveliitch.

Beaupre had been in his own country a valet, in Prussia a soldier, then he came to Russia to be a tutor, not knowing very well what the word meant in our language. He was a good fellow, astonishingly gay and absent-minded. His chief foible was a passion for the fair sex. Nor was he, to use his own expression, an enemy to the bottle — that is to say, *a la Russe*, he loved drink. But as at home wine was offered only at table, and then in small glasses, and as, moreover, on these occasions, the servants passed by the pedagogue, Beaupre soon accustomed himself to Russian brandy, and, in time, preferred it, as a better tonic, to the wines of his native country. We became great friends, and although according to contract he was engaged to teach me French, German, and *all the sciences*, yet he was content that I should teach him to chatter Russian. But as each of us minded his own business, our friendship was constant, and I desired no mentor. However, destiny very soon separated us, in consequence of an event which I will relate.

Our laundress, a fat girl all scarred by small-pox, and our dairymaid, who was blind of an eye, agreed, one fine day, to throw themselves at my mother's feet and accuse the Frenchman of trifling with their innocence and inexperience!

My mother would have no jesting upon this point, and she in turn complained to my father, who, like a man of business, promptly ordered "that dog of a Frenchman" into his presence. The servant informed him meekly that Beaupre was at the moment engaged in giving me a lesson.

My father rushed to my room. Beaupre was sleeping upon his bed the sleep of innocence. I was deep in a most interesting occupation. They had

brought from Moscow, for me, a geographical map, which hung unused against the wall; the width and strength of its paper had been to me a standing temptation. I had determined to make a kite of it, and profiting that morning by Beaupre's sleep, I had set to work. My father came in just as I was tying a tail to the Cape of Good Hope! Seeing my work, he seized me by the ear and shook me soundly; then rushing to Beaupre's bed, awakened him without hesitating, pouring forth a volley of abuse upon the head of the unfortunate Frenchman. In his confusion Beaupre tried in vain to rise; the poor pedagogue was dead drunk! My father caught him by the coat-collar and flung him out of the room. That day he was dismissed, to the inexpressible delight of Saveliitch.

Thus ended my education. I now lived in the family as the eldest son, not of age whose career is yet to open; amusing myself teaching pigeons to tumble on the roof, and playing leap-frog in the stable-yard with the grooms. In this way I reached my sixteenth year.

One Autumn day, my mother was preserving fruit with honey in the family room, and I, smacking my lips, was looking at the liquid boiling; my father, seated near the window, had just opened the *Court Almanac* which he received every year. This book had great influence over him; he read it with extreme attention, and reading prodigiously stirred up his bile. My mother, knowing by heart all his ways and oddities, used to try to hide the miserable book, and often whole months would pass without a sight of it. But, in revenge whenever he did happen to find it, he would sit for hours with the book before his eyes.

Well, my father was reading the *Court Almanac*, frequently shrugging his shoulders, and murmuring: "General! Umph, he was a sergeant in my company. 'Knight of the Orders of Russia.' Can it be so long since we — ?"

Finally he flung the *Almanac* away on the sofa and plunged into deep thought; a proceeding that never presaged anything good.

"Avoditia," said he, brusquely, to my mother, "how old is Peter?"

"His seventeenth precious year has just begun," said my mother. "Peter was born the year Aunt Anastasia lost her eye, and that was —"

"Well, well," said my father, "it is time he should join the army. It is high time he should give up his nurse, leap-frog and pigeon training."

The thought of a separation so affected my poor mother that she let the spoon fall into the preserving pan, and tears rained from her eyes.

As for me, it is difficult to express my joy. The idea of army service was mingled in my head with that of liberty, and the pleasures offered by a great city like Saint Petersburg. I saw myself an officer in the Guards, which, in my opinion was the height of felicity.

As my father neither liked to change his plans, nor delay their execution, the day of my departure was instantly fixed. That evening, saying that he would give me a letter to my future chief, he called for writing materials.

"Do not forget, Andrew," said my mother, "to salute for me Prince B. Tell him that I depend upon his favor for my darling Peter."

“What nonsense,” said my father, frowning, “why should I write to Prince B.?”

“You have just said that you would write to Peter’s future chief.”

“Well, what then?”

“Prince B. is his chief. You know very well that Peter is enrolled in the Semenofski regiment.”

“Enrolled! what’s that to me? Enrolled or not enrolled, he shall not go to Saint Petersburg. What would he learn there? Extravagance and folly. No! let him serve in the army, let him smell powder, let him be a soldier and not a do-nothing in the Guards; let him wear the straps of his knapsack out. Where is the certificate of his birth and baptism?”

My mother brought the certificate, which she kept in a little box with my baptismal robe, and handed it to my father. He read it, placed it before him on the table, and commenced his letter.

I was devoured by curiosity. Where am I going, thought I, if not to Saint Petersburg? I did not take my eyes from the pen which my father moved slowly across the paper.

At last, the letter finished, he put it and my certificate under the same envelope, took off his spectacles, called me and said:

“This letter is addressed to Andrew Karlovitch, my old friend and comrade. You are going to Orenbourg to serve under orders.”

All my brilliant dreams vanished. In place of the gay life of Saint Petersburg, ennui awaited me in a wild and distant province of the empire. Military life seemed now a calamity.

The next morning a kibitka was at the door; my trunk was placed on it, and also a case holding tea and a tea-service, with some napkins full of rolls and pastry, the last sweet bits of the paternal home. Both my parents gave me their solemn benediction. My father said, “Adieu, Peter. Serve faithfully him to whom your oath is given; obey your chiefs; neither seek favor, nor solicit service, but do not reject them; and remember the proverb: ‘Take care of thy coat whilst it is new, and thy honor whilst it is fresh.’”

My darling mother, all in tears, told me to take care of my health; and counseled Saveliitch to guard her child from danger.

I was wrapped up in a short touloup lined with hare-skin, and over that a pelisse lined fox-skin. I took my seat in the kibitka with Saveliitch, and shedding bitter tears, set out for my destination.

That night I arrived at Simbirsk, where I was to stay twenty-four hours, in order that Saveliitch might make various purchases entrusted to him. Early in the morning Saveliitch went to the shops, whilst I stayed in the inn. Tired of gazing out of the window upon a dirty little street, I rambled about the inn, and at last entered the billiard-room. I found there a tall gentleman, some forty years of age, with heavy black moustaches, in his dressing-gown, holding a cue and smoking his pipe. He was playing with the marker, who was to drink a glass of brandy and water if he gained, and if he lost was to pass, on all-fours, under the billiard table. I watched them playing. The more they played the more frequent became the promenades on all-

fours, so that finally the marker stayed under the table. The gentleman pronounced over him some energetic expression, as a funeral oration, and then proposed that I should play a game with him. I declared that I did not know how to play billiards. That seemed strange to him. He looked at me with commiseration.

However, we opened a conversation. I learned that his name was Ivan Zourine; that he was a chief of a squadron of Hussars stationed then at Simbirsk recruiting soldiers, and that his quarters were at my inn. He invited me to mess with him, soldier-fashion, pot-luck. I accepted with pleasure, and we sat down to dinner. Zourine drank deeply, and invited me to drink also, saying that I must become accustomed to the service. He told stories of garrison life which made me laugh till I held my sides, and we rose from the table intimate friends. He then proposed to teach me how to play billiards. "It is," said he, "indispensable for soldiers like ourselves. For example, suppose we arrive in a town, what's to be done? We can not always make sport of the Jews. As a last resort there is the inn and the billiard-room; but to play billiards, one must know how." These reasons convinced me, and I set about learning with enthusiasm.

Zourine encouraged me in a loud tone; he was astonished at my rapid progress, and after a few lessons he proposed to play for money, were it only two kopecks, not for the gain, merely to avoid playing for nothing, which was, according to him, a very bad habit. I agreed. Zourine ordered punch, which he advised me to taste in order to become used to the service, "for," said he, "what kind of service would that be without punch?"

I took his advice, and we continued to play; the more I tasted of my glass the bolder I grew. I made the balls fly over the cushions; I was angry with the marker who was counting. Heaven knows why. I increased the stake, and behaved, altogether, like a boy just cut free, for the first time, from his mother's apron-strings. The time passed quickly. At last, Zourine glanced at the clock, laid down his cue, and said that I had lost a hundred roubles to him.

I was in great confusion, because my money was all in the hands of Saveliitch. I began to mumble excuses, when Zourine exclaimed, "Oh! well! Good God! I can wait till morning; don't be distressed about it. Now let us go to supper." What could I do? I finished the day as foolishly as I began it.

Zourine never ceased pouring out drinks for me; advising me to become accustomed to the service. Rising from table, I could scarcely stand. At midnight Zourine brought me back to the inn.

Saveliitch met us at the door, and uttered a cry of horror when he saw the unmistakable signs of my "zeal for the service."

"What has happened to thee?" said he, in heart-broken accents; "where have you been filling yourself like a sack? Oh! heavenly father! a misfortune like this never came before."

"Silence! old owl," said I, stammering, "I am sure you are drunk yourself; go to bed, but first put me there."

I awoke next morning with a severe headache; the events of the evening I recalled vaguely, but my recollections became vivid at the sight of Saveliitch who came to me with a cup of tea.

"You begin young, Peter Grineff," said the old man, shaking his head. "Eh! from whom do you inherit it? Neither your father nor grandfather were drunkards. Your mother's name can not be mentioned; she never deigned to taste any thing but cider. Whose fault is it then? That cursed Frenchman's; he taught three fine things, that miserable dog — that pagan — for thy teacher, as if his lordship, thy father, had not people of his own."

I was ashamed before the old man; I turned my face away saying, "I do not want any tea, go away, Saveliitch." It was not easy to stop Saveliitch, once he began to preach.

"Now, Peter, you see what it is to play the fool. You have a headache, you have no appetite, a drunkard is good for nothing. Here, take some of this decoction of cucumber and honey, or half a glass of brandy to sober you. What do you say to that?"

At that instant a boy entered the room with a note for me from Zourine. I unfolded it and read as follows:

"Do me the favor, my dear Peter, to send me by my servant the hundred roubles that you lost to me yesterday. I am horribly in want of money. Your devoted. ZOURINE."

As I was perfectly in his power, I assumed an air of indifference, and ordered Saveliitch to give a hundred roubles to the boy.

"What? why?" said the old man, surprised.

"I owe that sum," said I, coolly.

"You owe it? When had you time enough to contract such a debt?" said he, with redoubled astonishment. "No, no, that's impossible. Do what you like, my lord, but I can not give the money."

I reflected that if in this decisive moment I did not oblige the obstinate old fellow to obey me, it would be impossible in the future to escape from his tutelage. Looking at him therefore, haughtily, I said, "I am thy master; thou art my servant. The money is mine, and I lost because I chose to lose it; I advise thee to obey when ordered, and not assume the airs of a master."

My words affected Saveliitch so much that he clasped his hands and stood bowed down mute and motionless.

"What are you doing there like a post?" I cried out, angrily.

Saveliitch was in tears.

"Oh! my dear master Peter," stammered he, with trembling voice, "do not kill me with grief. Oh my light, listen to me, an old man; write to that brigand that you were jesting, that we never had so much money. A hundred roubles! God of goodness! Tell him thy parents strictly forbade thee to play for any thing but nuts."

"Silence," said I, with severity, "give the money or I'll chase you out of the room."

Saveliitch looked at me with agony, and went for the money. I pitied the good old man, but I wanted to emancipate myself, and prove that I was no

longer a child. Saveliitch sent the money to Zourine, and then hastened our departure from that cursed inn.

I left Simbirsk with a troubled conscience; a secret remorse oppressed me. I took no leave of my teacher, not dreaming that I should ever meet him again.

II. THE GUIDE.

My reflections during the journey were not very agreeable. According to the value of money at that time my loss was of some importance. I could not but admit to myself that my conduct at the inn at Simbirsk had been very silly, and I felt guilty toward Saveliitch. The old man was seated on the front of the vehicle in dull silence; from time to time turning his head and coughing a cough of ill humor. I had firmly resolved to make friends with him, but I did not know which way to begin. At last I said to him, "Come, come Saveliitch, let us put an end to this; I know I was wrong; I was a fool yesterday, and offended you without cause, but I promise to listen to you in future. Come, do not be angry, let us make friends!"

"Ah! My dear Peter," said he with a sigh, "I am angry with myself. It's I who was wrong in every thing. How could I have left you alone at the inn? How could it have been avoided? The devil had a hand in it! I wanted to go and see the deacon's wife, who is my god-mother, and as the proverb says: 'I left the house and fell into the prison.'"

What a misfortune! what a misfortune! How can I appear before the eyes of my masters? What will they say, when they shall hear that their child is a drunkard and a gambler. To console dear old Saveliitch, I gave him my word, that for the future I would not dispose of single kopeck without his consent. Little by little he became calm, which did not, however, prevent him from grumbling out, now and then shaking his head: "A hundred roubles! It is easy to talk!"

I drew near the place of my destination. Around me extended a desert, sad and wild, broken by little hills and deep ravines, all covered with snow. The sun was setting.

My kibitka followed the narrow road, or rather trace, left by peasants' sledges. Suddenly my coachman, looking at a certain point and addressing me, "My lord," said he, taking off his cap, "do you not command us to retrace our steps?"

"What for?"

"The weather is uncertain. There is some wind ahead; do you see it drive the snow on the surface?"

"What matter?"

"And do you not see what is over yonder?" pointing with his whip to the east.

"I see nothing more than the white steppes and the clear sky."

"There! there! that little cloud!"

I saw indeed upon the horizon a little white cloud that I had at first taken for a distant hill. My coachman explained to me that this little cloud foretold a *chasse-neige* — a snowdrift. I had heard of the drifting snows of this region, and I know that at times, storms swallowed up whole caravans. Saveliitch agreed with the coachman, and advised our return.

But to me the wind did not seem very strong. I hoped to arrive in time for the next relay of horses. I gave orders, therefore, to redouble our speed. The coachman put his horses to the gallop, and kept his eyes to the east.

The wind blew harder and harder. The little cloud soon became a great white mass, rising heavily, growing, extending, and finally invading the whole sky. A fine snow began to fall, which suddenly changed to immense flakes. The wind whistled and howled. It was a *chasse-neige* — a snowdrift.

In an instant the somber sky was confounded with the sea of snow which the wind raised up from the earth. Every thing was indistinguishable.

“Woe, to us! my lord,” cried the coachman, “it is a whirlwind of snow!”

I put my head out of the kibitka — darkness and storm. The wind blew with an expression so ferocious that it seemed a living creature.

The snow fell in large flakes upon us, covering us. The horses went at a walking pace, but very soon stood still.

“Why do you not go on?” I said to the coachman.

“Go where?” he replied, as he got down from the kibitka. “God knows where we are now! There is no road; all is darkness.”

I began to scold him. Saveliitch took up his defense:

“Why did you not listen to him,” said he, angrily; “you could have returned, taken some tea and slept till morning; the storm would have been over, and we could then have set out. Why this haste? as if you were going to your wedding?”

Saveliitch was right. What was to be done? The snow continued to fall; it was heaped up around the kibitka; the horses stood motionless, now and then shivering. The coachman walked around them adjusting their harness, as if he had nothing else to do.

Saveliitch grumbled.

I strained my eyes in every direction, hoping to see signs of a dwelling, or of a road, but I could only see the whirling of the snow-drift. All at once I thought I saw some thing black. “Halloo! coachman,” I cried out, “what is that black thing yonder?”

The coachman looked attentively where I indicated. “God knows, my lord,” he replied, re-mounting to his seat; “it is not a kibitka, nor a tree; it seems to be moving. It must be a wolf or a man!”

I ordered him to go in the direction of the unknown object which was coming toward us. In two minutes we were on a line with it, and I recognized a man.

“Halloo! good man!” shouted my coachman; “tell us, do you know the road?”

“This is the road,” replied the man. “I am on solid ground, but what the devil is the good of that.”

“Listen, my good peasant,” said I; “do you know this country? Can you lead us to a shelter for the night?”

“This country! Thank God, I have been over it on foot and in carriage, from one end to the other. But one can not help losing the road in this

weather. It is better to stop here and wait till the hurricane ceases: then the sky will clear, and we can find the way by the stars."

His coolness gave me courage. I had decided to trust myself to the mercy of God and pass the night on the steppe, when the traveler, seating himself on the bench which was the coachman's seat, said to the driver:

"Thank God, a dwelling is near. Turn to the right and go on."

"Why should I turn to the right?" said the coachman, sulkily, "where do you see a road?"

"Must I say to you these horses, as well as the harness, belong to another? then use the whip without respite."

I thought my coachman's view rational.

"Why do you believe," said I to the new-comer, "that a dwelling is not far off?"

"The wind blows from that quarter," said he, "and I have smelled smoke — proof that a dwelling is near."

His sagacity, the delicacy of his sense of smell, filled me with admiration; I ordered my coachman to go wherever the other wished. The horses walked heavily through the deep snow. The kибitka advanced but slowly, now raised on a hillock, now descending into a hollow, swaying from side like a boat on a stormy sea.

Saveliitch, falling over on me every instant, moaned. I pulled down the hood of the kибitka, wrapped myself up in my pelisse, and fell asleep, rocked by the swaying of the vehicle, and lulled by the chant of the tempest.

The horses stopped. Saveliitch was holding my hand.

"Come out, my lord," said he, "we have arrived."

"Where have we arrived?" said I, rubbing my eyes.

"At the shelter. God has helped us; we have stumbled right upon the hedge of the dwelling. Come out, my lord, quick; come and warm yourself."

I descended from the kибitka; the hurricane had not ceased, but it had moderated; sight was useless, it was so dark. The master of the house met us at the door, holding a lantern under the flaps of his long coat, the Cossack cafetan. He led us into a small, though no untidy room, lighted by a pine torch. In the centre hung a carabine and a high Cossack cap.

Our host, a Cossack from the river Iaik, was a peasant of some sixty years, still fresh and green.

Saveliitch brought in the case containing my tea-service; he asked for fire to make me a few cups of tea, of which I never had greater need. The host hastened to serve us.

"Where is our guide?" I asked of Saveliitch.

"Here, your lordship," replied a voice from above. I raised my eyes to the loft, and saw a black beard and two sparkling black eyes.

"Well, are you cold?"

"How could I help being cold in this little cafetan full of holes. What's the use of concealment? I had a touloup, but I left it yesterday in pledge

with the liquor-seller; then the cold did not seem so great.”

At this moment our host entered with the portable furnace and boiler, the Russian *Somovar*. I offered our guide a cup of tea. Down he came at once. As he stood in the glare of the pine torch his appearance was remarkable. A man about forty years of age, medium height, slight but with broad shoulders. His black beard was turning grey; large, quick, restless eyes, gave him an expression full of cunning, and yet not at all disagreeable. He was dressed in wide Tartar pantaloons and an old jacket. His hair was cut evenly round.

I offered him a cup of tea. He tasted it and made a grimace.

“Do me the favor, my lord, to order me a glass of brandy; tea is not the Cossack’s drink.”

I willingly granted the request. The host took from the shelf of a closet a bottle and a glass, and going up to him, looking him full in the face, said:

“Ah! ah! here you are again in our district. Whence has God brought you?”

My guide winked in the most significant fashion and replied by the well-known proverb: “‘The sparrow was in the orchard eating flax-seed; the grandmother threw a stone at it, and missed.’ And you? how are all yours?”

“How are we?” said the host, and continuing in proverbs: “‘They began to ring the bell for Vespers, but the priest’s wife forbade it. The priest went visiting, and the devils are in the graveyard.’”

“Be silent, uncle,” said the vagabond.

“‘When there shall be rain, there will be mushrooms, and when there shall be mushrooms, there will be a basket to put them in. Put thy hatchet behind thy back, the forest guard is out walking.’”

“To your lordship’s health.” Taking the glass, he made the sign of the cross, and at one gulp swallowed his brandy. He then saluted me and remounted to his loft. I did not understand a word of this thief’s slang. It was only in the sequel that I learned that they spoke of the affairs of the army of the Iaik, which had just been reduced to obedience after the revolt of 1772. Saveliitch listened and glanced suspiciously from host to guide.

The species of inn where we were sheltered was in the very heart of the steppes, far from the road and every inhabited spot, and looked very much like a rendezvous of robbers. But to set off again on our journey was impossible. The disgust of Saveliitch amused not a little; however, he finally decided to mount upon the roof of the stove, the ordinary bed of the Russian peasant. The warm bricks of the hot-air chamber of the stove diffused a grateful heat, and soon the old man and the host, who had laid himself on the floor, were snoring. I stretched myself upon a bench, and slept like a dead. Awaking next morning quite late, I saw that the hurricane was over. The sun shone out, the snow extended in the distance like a sheet of dazzling white damask. The horses were already at the door, harnessed. I paid our host, who asked so small a pittance that even Saveliitch did not, as usual, haggle over the price. His suspicions of the evening before had entirely disappeared. I called the guide to thank him for the service he had

done us, and told Saveliitch to give him half a rouble. Saveliitch frowned.

"Half a rouble," said he; "What for? Because you yourself deigned to bring him to the inn? Your will be done, my lord, but we have not a rouble to spare. If we begin by giving drink money to every one we shall end by dying of hunger."

It was useless to argue with him; my money, according to my promise, was entirely at his discretion. But it was very unpleasant not to be able to reward a man who had extricated me from danger, perhaps death.

"Well," said I, coolly, "if you will not give him half a rouble, give one of my coats — he is too thinly clad; give him the hare-skin touloup."

"Have mercy on me! My dear Peter," said Saveliitch, "what does he want with your touloup? He will drink its price, the dog, at the first inn."

"That, my good old man, is none of your business," said the vagabond; "his lordship following the custom of royalty to vassals, gives me a coat from his own back, and your duty as serf is not to dispute, but to obey."

"You have not the fear of God, brigand that you are," said Saveliitch, angrily; "you see that the child has not yet attained to full reason, and there you are, glad to pillage him, thanks to his kind heart. You can not even wear the pelisse on your great, cursed shoulders."

"Come," said I, "do not play the logician; bring the touloup quickly."

"Oh, Lord!" said the old man, moaning — "a touloup of hare-skin! Quite new, — to give it to a drunkard in rags."

It was brought, however, and the vagabond began to get into it. It was rather tight for me, and was much too small for him. He put it on, nevertheless, but with great difficulty, bursting all the seams. Saveliitch uttered something like a smothered howl, when he heard the threads crack. As for the vagabond, he was well pleased with my present. He re-conducted me to my kibitka, and said, with a profound bow: "Thanks, my lord, may god reward you. I shall never forget your goodness."

He went his way, — I set out on mine, paying no attention to the sullenness of Saveliitch. I soon forgot the hurricane and the guide, as well as the touloup of hare-skin.

Arrived at Orenbourg, I presented myself at once to the General. He was a tall man, bent by age, with long hair quite white. An old, worn-out uniform, recalled the soldier of the times of the Empress Anne, and his speech betrayed a strong German accent.

I gave him my father's letter.

Reading my name, he glanced at me quickly. "Mein Gott," said he, "it is so short a time since Andrew Grineff was your age, and now, see what a fine fellow of a son he has. Ah! time! time!" He opened the letter and began to run it over with a commentary of remarks.

"'Sir, I hope your Excellency,' — What is this; what is the meaning of this ceremony? discipline, of course before all, but is this the way to write to an old friend? Hum — 'Field-marshal Munich — little Caroline — brother.' Ah! then he remembers — 'Now to business. I send you my son; hold him with porcupine gloves.'"

“What does that mean?” said he, “that must be a Russian proverb.”

“It means,” said I, with an air of innocence, “to treat a person mildly, to give one liberty.”

“Hum!” said he, reading, “‘and give him no liberty.’ No,” he continued, “your proverb does not mean liberty. Well, my son,” said he, having finished the letter, “every thing shall be done for you. You shall be an officer in the —— regiment, and not to lose time, go tomorrow to the fort of Belogorsk, where you will serve under Captain Mironoff, a brave and honest man. There you will see service and learn discipline. You have nothing to do here at Orenbourg, and amusements are dangerous to a young man. Today I invite you to dine with me.”

From bad to worse, thought I. What was the use of being a Sergeant in the Guards almost from my mother’s womb? To what has it led? To the regiment of ——, and an abandoned fortress on the frontier of the steppes!

I dined at the General’s in company with his old Aid-de-camp. Severe German economy reigned at table, and I think the fear of having an occasional guest the more had something to do with sending me to a distant garrison.

The next day I took my leave of the General and set out for Belogorsk.

III. THE FORTRESS.

The fortress of Belogorsk is situated forty versts from Orenbourg. The route from this city is along the high banks of the river Iaik. The stream was not yet frozen, and its lead-colored waters took a black tint between banks whitened by the snow. Before me lay the Kirghis steppes. I fell into a moody train of thought, for to me garrison life offered few attractions. I tried to picture my future chief, Captain Mironoff. I imagined a severe, morose old man, knowing nothing outside of the service, ready to arrest me for the least slip. Dusk was falling; we were advancing rapidly.

"How far is it from here to the fortress?" said I to the coachman.

"You can see it now," he answered.

I looked on all sides, expecting to see high bastions, a wall, and a ditch. I saw nothing but a little village surrounded by a wooden palisade. On one side stood some hay-stacks half covered with snow; on the other a wind-mill, leaning to one side; the wings of the mill, made of the heavy bark of the linden tree, hung idle.

"Where is the fortress?" I asked, astonished.

"There it is," said the coachman, pointing to the village which we had just entered. I saw near the gate an old iron cannon. The streets were narrow and winding, and nearly all the huts were thatched with straw. I ordered the coachman to drive to the Commandant's, and almost immediately my kibitka stopped before a wooden house built on an eminence near the church, which was also of wood. From the front door I entered the waiting-room. An old pensioner, seated on a table, was sewing a blue piece on the elbow of a green uniform. I told him to announce me.

"Enter, my good sir," said he, "our people are at home."

I entered a very neat room, furnished in the fashion of other days. On one side stood a cabinet containing the silver. Against the wall hung the diploma of an officer, with colored engravings arranged around its frame; notably, the "Choice of the Betrothed," the "Taking of Kurstrin," and the "Burial of the Cat by the Mice." Near the window sat an old woman in a mantilla, her head wrapped in a handkerchief. She was winding a skein of thread held on the separated hands of a little old man, blind of one eye, who was dressed like an officer.

"What do you desire, my dear sir?" said the woman to me, without interrupting her occupation. I told her that I had come to enter the service, and that, according to rule, I hastened to present myself to the captain. In saying this, I turned to the one-eyed old man, whom I took for the commandant. The good lady interrupted the speech which I had prepared in advance:

"Ivan Mironoff is not at home; he is gone to visit Father Garasim; but it is all the same; I am his wife. Deign to love us and have us in favor! Take a seat, my dear sir." She ordered a servant to send her the Corporal. The little old man gazed at me curiously, with his only eye.

"May I dare to ask," said he, "in what regiment you have deigned to serve?"

I satisfied him on that point.

"And may I dare to ask why you changed from the Guards to our garrison?"

I replied that it was by the orders of authority.

"Probably for actions little becoming an officer of the Guards?" resumed the persistent questioner.

"Will you stop your stupidities?" said the Captain's wife to him. "You see the young man is fatigued by the journey; he has something else to do besides answering you. Hold your hands better! And you my dear sir," continued she, turning to me, "do not be too much afflicted that you are thrust into our little town; you are not the first, and will not be the last. Now, there is Alexis Chabrine, who has been transferred to us for a term of four years for murder. God knows what provocation he had. He and a lieutenant went outside the city with their swords, and before two witnesses Alexis killed the lieutenant. Ah! misfortune has no master."

Just then the Corporal entered, a young and handsome Cossack. "Maxim," said the Captain's wife, "give this officer a clean lodging."

"I obey, Basilia," replied the Cossack; "shall I lodge him with Ivan Pologoff?"

"You are doting, Maxim, he has too little space now; besides, he is my child's godfather; and, moreover, he never forgets that we are his chiefs. What is your name, my dear sir?"

"Peter Grineff."

"Then conduct Peter Grineff to the quarters of Simeon Kieff. That rascal let his horse into my vegetable garden. Is all right, Maxim?"

"Thank God, all is quiet, except that Corporal Kourzoff quarreled with the woman Augustina about a pail of warm water."

"Ignatius," said the Captain's wife to the one-eyed man, "judge between the two — decide which one is guilty, and punish both. Go, Maxim, God be with you. Peter Grineff, Maxim will conduct you to your lodgings."

I took my leave; the Corporal led me to a cabin placed on the high bank near the river's edge, at the end of the fortress. Half of the cabin was occupied by the family of Simeon Kieff, the other was given up to me. My half of the cabin was a large apartment divided by a partition. Saveliitch began at once to install us, whilst I looked out of the narrow window. Before me stretched the bleak and barren steppe; nearer rose some cabins; at the threshold of one stood a woman with a bowl in her hand calling the pigs to feed; no other objects met my sight, save a few chickens scratching for stray kernels of corn in the street. And this was the country to which I was condemned to pass my youth! I turned from the window, seized by bitter sadness, and went to bed without supper, notwithstanding the supplications of Saveliitch, who with anguish cried aloud: "Oh! he will not deign to eat! O Lord! what will my mistress say, if the child should fall ill!"

The next morning I had scarcely begun to dress, when a young officer entered my room. He was of small size, with irregular features, but his sun-burned face had remarkable vivacity. "Pardon me," said he in French, "that I come so unceremoniously to make your acquaintance. I learned yesterday of your arrival, and the desire of seeing at last a human face so took possession of me that I could wait no longer. You will understand this when you shall have lived here some time!"

I easily guessed that he was the officer dismissed from the Guards for the affair of the duel — Alexis Chabrine. He was very intelligent; his conversation was sprightly and interesting. He described with impulse and gayety the Commandant's family, society, and in general the whole country round. I was laughing heartily, when Ignatius, the same old pensioner whom I had seen mending his uniform in the Captain's waiting-room, entered, and gave me an invitation to dinner from Basilia Mironoff, the Captain's wife. Alexis declared that he would accompany me.

Approaching the Commandant's house we saw on the square some twenty little old pensioners, with long queues and three-cornered hats. These old men were drawn up in line of battle. Before them stood the Commandant, a fresh and vigorous old man of high stature, in dressing-gown and cotton cap. As soon as he saw us, he approached, addressed me a few affable words, and then resumed his drill. We were going to stay to see the manoeuvring, but he begged us to go on immediately to the house, promising to join us at once; "for," said he, "there is really nothing to be seen here."

Basilia received us kindly, and with simplicity, treating me like an old acquaintance. The pensioner and the maid Polacca were laying the tablecloth.

"What is the matter with my dear Ivan Mironoff, today, that he is so long instructing his troops?" said the mistress. "Polacca, go and bring him to dinner. And where is my child, Marie?" Scarcely had she pronounced this name, than a young girl about sixteen entered the room; — a rosy, round-faced girl, wearing her hair in smooth bandeaux caught behind her ears, which were red with modesty and shyness. She did not please me very much at the first glance; I was prejudiced against her by Alexis, who had described the Captain's daughter to me as a fool. Marie seated herself in a corner and began to sew. The soup was brought on the table. Basilia, not seeing her husband coming, sent the maid a second time to call him.

"Tell the master that his inspection can wait; the soup is cooling. Thank God! the drills need not be lost; there will be time enough yet to use his voice at his leisure."

The captain soon appeared with his one-eyed officer.

"What's this, my dear," said Basilia; "the table has been served some time, and no one could make you come."

"You see, Basilia, I was busy with the service, instructing my good soldiers."

"Come, come, Ivan Mironoff, that's boasting. The service does not suit them, and as for you, you know nothing about it. You should have stayed at home and prayed God, that suits you much better. My dear guests, to table."

We took our places for dinner. Basilia was not silent a moment; she overwhelmed me with questions: Who were my parents? Were they living? Where did they reside? What was their fortune? When she learned that my father owned three hundred serfs, she exclaimed:

"You see there are some rich people in the world — and we, my dear sir, in point of souls, we possess only the maid Polacca. Yet, thank God, we live, somehow or other. We have but one care, that is Marie, a girl that must be married off. And what fortune has she? The price of two baths per annum. If only she could find a worthy husband. If not, there she is, eternally a maid."

I glanced at Marie; she blushed, tears were dropping into her soup. I pitied her, and hastened to change the conversation. "I have heard that the Bashkirs intend to attack your fortress?"

"Who said so," replied Ivan Mironoff.

"I heard it at Orenbourg."

"All nonsense," said Ivan, "we have not heard the least word about it; the Bashkirs are an intimidated people; and the Kirghis have also had some good lessons. They dare not attack us, and if they should even dream of it, I would give them so great a fright that they would not move again for ten years."

"Do you not fear," I continued, addressing Basilia, "to stay in a fortress exposed to these dangers?"

"A matter of habit, my dear," she replied, "twenty years ago, when we were transferred here from the regiment, you could not believe how I feared the pagans. If I chanced to see their fur caps, if I heard their shouts, believe me, my heart was ready to faint; but now I am so used to this life, that if told that the brigands were prowling around us, I would not stir from the fortress."

"Basilia is a very brave lady," observed Alexis, gravely. "Ivan Mironoff knows some thing about it."

"Oh, you see," said Ivan, "she does not belong to the regiment of poltroons."

"And Marie," I asked of her mother "is she as bold as you?"

"Marie?" said the lady. "No! Marie is a coward. Up to the present she has not heard the report of a gun without trembling in every limb. Two years ago Ivan had a pleasant fancy to fire off his cannon on my birthday; the poor pigeon was so frightened that she almost went into the next world. Since that day the miserable cannon has not spoken."

We rose from the table. The captain and his wife went to take their siesta. I went with Alexis to his room, where we passed the evening together.

IV. THE DUEL.

Several weeks elapsed, during which my life in the fortress became not only supportable, but even agreeable. I was received as a member of the family in the Commandant's house. The husband and wife were excellent people. Ivan Mironoff, from being the adopted child of the regiment, rose to officer's rank. He was a plain, simple, uneducated man, but thoroughly good and loyal. His wife governed him, and that suited his natural indolence. Basilia directed the affairs of the garrison, as she did her household, and commanded through the fortress as she did in her own kitchen. Marie soon lost her shyness, and as we became better acquainted I found that she was a girl full of affection and intelligence. Little by little I became deeply attached to this good family.

I was promoted, and ranked as an officer. Military service did not oppress me. In this fortress, blessed by God, there was no duty to do, no guard to mount, nor review to pass. Occasionally, for his own amusement, the Commandant drilled his soldiers. He had not yet succeeded in teaching them which was the right flank and which the left.

Alexis had some French books, and in my idleness I set work to read, so that a taste for literature awoke within me. I read every morning, and essayed some translations, even metrical compositions. Almost every day I dined at the Commandant's, where, as a general thing, I spent the rest of the day. In the evening, Father Garasim came with his wife, Accoulina, the greatest gossip of the place. Of course Alexis and I met daily, yet gradually his society displeased me. His perpetual jokes upon the Commandant's family, and above all his biting remarks about Marie, rendered his conversation very disagreeable to me. I had no other society than this family in the fortress, and I desired no other. All predictions to the contrary, the Bashkirs did not revolt, and peace reigned around us.

I have already said that I busied myself somewhat with literature. One day I happened to write a little song, of which I was proud. It is well known that authors, under pretext of asking advice, willingly seek a kindly audience. I copied my little song and took it to Alexis, the only one in the fortress who could appreciate a poetical work. After preluding a little, I drew my pages from my pocket and read my verses to him.

"How do you like that?" said I, expecting praise as a tribute due me. To my great annoyance, Alexis, who was generally pleased with my writings, declared frankly that my song was worth nothing.

"What do you mean?" said I, with forced calmness. He took the paper out of my hand and began to criticize without pity, every verse, every word, tearing me up in the most malicious fashion. It was too much. I snatched the paper from him, declaring that never again would I show him any of my compositions.

"We shall see," said he, "if you can keep your word; poets need a listener as Ivan Mironoff needs a decanter of brandy before dinner. Who is

this Marie to whom you declare your tender feelings? Might it not be Marie Mironoff?"

"That is none of your business," said I, frowning. "I want neither your advice nor supposition."

"Oh! oh! vain poet; discreet lover," continued Alexis, irritating me more and more, "listen to friendly counsel: if you want to succeed do not confine yourself to songs."

"What do you mean, sir? Explain!"

"With pleasure," he replied. "I mean that if you wish to form an intimacy with Marie Mironoff, you have only to give her a pair of earrings instead of your lackadaisical verses."

All my blood boiled. "Why have you this opinion of her?" I asked, with much effort restraining my anger.

"Because," said he, "of my own experience."

"You lie, wretch," I cried, with fury, "you lie, shamelessly."

Alexis was enraged.

"That shall not pass so," he said, grasping my hand. "You shall give me satisfaction."

"When ever you like," I replied, joyfully, for at that moment I was ready to tear him to pieces. I ran at once to see Ivan Ignatius, whom I found with a needle in his hand. According to orders from the Commandant's wife, he was stringing mushrooms which were to be dried for winter use.

"Ah! Peter Grineff, be welcome. Dare I ask on what business God sends you here?"

In a few words I told him of my quarrel with Alexis, and begged him, Ignatius, to be my second. Ignatius heard me to the end with great attention, opening wide his only eye.

"You deign to say that you want to kill Alexis, and desire that I should witness the act? Is that what you mean, dare I ask?"

"Precisely."

"Ah! what folly; you have had some words with Alexis. What then? A harsh word can not be hung up by the neck. He gives you impertinence, give him the same; if he give you a slap, return the blow; he a second, you a third; in the end we will compel you to make peace. Whilst if you fight — well, if *you* should kill *him*, God be with him! for I do not like him much; but if he should perforate you, what a nice piece of business! Then who will pay for the broken pots?"

The arguments of the prudent officer did not shake my resolution.

"Do as you like," said Ignatius, "but what's the use of having me as a witness? People fight — that's nothing extraordinary — I have often been quite close to Swedes and Turks, and people of all shades of color."

I tried to explain to him the duties of a second; Ignatius would not, or could not understand me. "Follow your own fashion," said he, "if I were to meddle in this affair, it would be to announce to Ivan Mironoff, according to rule, that a plot is being made in the fortress for the commission of a criminal action — one contrary to the interests of the crown."

I was alarmed, and begged Ignatius to say nothing to the Commandant. He gave me his word that he would be silent, and I left him in peace. As usual I passed the evening at the Commandant's, forcing myself to be calm and gay, in order not to awaken suspicions and to avoid questioning. I confess that I had not the coolness of which people boast who have been in a similar position. I was disposed to tenderness. Marie Mironoff seemed more attractive than ever. The idea that perhaps I saw her for the last time, gave her a touching grace.

Alexis entered. I took him aside and told him of my conversation with Ignatius.

"What's the good of seconds," said he, dryly. "We can do without them."

We agreed to fight behind the haystack the next morning at six o'clock.

Seeing us talking amicably, Ignatius, full of joy, nearly betrayed us. "You should have done that long ago, for a bad peace is better than a good quarrel."

"What! what! Ignatius," said the Captain's wife, who was playing patience in a corner, "I do not quite understand?"

Ignatius, seeing my displeasure, remembered his promise, became confused and knew not what to answer. Alexis came to his relief: "He approves of peace."

"With whom had you quarreled?" said she.

"With Peter Grineff — a few high words."

"Why?"

"For a mere nothing — a song."

"Fine cause for a quarrel! a song! Tell me how it happened."

"Willingly: Peter has recently been composing, and this morning he sang his song for me. Then I chanted mine:

'Daughter of the Captain, walk not forth at midnight.'

As we were not on the same note, Peter was angry, forgetting that every one is at liberty to sing what he pleases."

The insolence of Alexis made me furious. No one but myself understood his allusions. From poetry the conversation passed to poets in general. The Commandant observed that they were all debauchees and drunkards, and advised me, as a friend, to renounce poetry as contrary to the service, and leading to nothing good.

As the pretence of Alexis was to me insupportable, I hastened to take leave of the family. In my own apartment I examined my sword, tried its point, and went to bed, having ordered Saveliitch to wake me in the morning at six o'clock.

The next day at the appointed time I was behind the haystack awaiting my adversary, who did not fail to appear. "We may be surprised," he said; "be quick." We laid aside our uniforms, drew our swords from the scabbards, when Ignatius, followed by five pensioners, came out from behind a haystack. He ordered us to repair to the presence of the Commandant. We obeyed. The soldiers surrounded us. Ignatius conducted us in triumph, marching military step, with majestic gravity. We entered the

Commandant's house; Ignatius opened the folding doors, and exclaimed with emphasis: "They are taken!"

Basilia ran toward us: "What does this mean? plotting an assassination in our fortress! Ivan Mironoff, arrest them! Peter Grineff, Alexis, give up your swords to the garret. Peter, I did not expect this of you; are you not ashamed? As for Alexis, it is quite different; he was transferred to us from the Guards for having caused a soul to perish; and he does not believe in our blessed Saviour."

Ivan Mironoff approved increasingly all that his wife said: "You see! You see! Basilia is right, duels are forbidden by the military code."

Meantime Polacca had carried off our swords to the garret. I could not help smiling at this scene. Alexis preserved all his gravity, and said to Basilia: "Notwithstanding all my respect for you, I must say you take useless pains to subject us to your tribunal. Leave that duty to Ivan Mironoff; it is his business."

"What! what! my dear sir," said the lady, "are not man and wife the same flesh and spirit? Ivan Mironoff, are you trifling? Lock up these boys instantly; put them in separate rooms — on bread and water, to expel this stupid idea of theirs. Let Father Garasim give them a penance on order that they may repent before God and man."

Ivan Mironoff did not know what to do. Marie was extremely pale. The tempest, however, subsided little by little. Basilia ordered us to embrace each other, and the maid was sent for our swords. We left the house, having in appearance made friends. Ignatius re-conducted us.

"Are you not ashamed of yourself," I said to him, "to have denounced us to the Commandant, after having given me your word you would not do so?"

"As God is holy, I said nothing to Ivan Mironoff. Basilia drew it all from me. She took all the necessary measures without the knowledge of the Commandant. Thank God it finished as it did." He went to his room; I remained with Alexis.

"Our affair can not end thus," I remarked.

"Certainly not," replied Alexis. "You shall pay me with your blood for your impertinence, but as undoubtedly we shall be watched, let us feign for a few days. Until then, adieu!"

We separated as if nothing had happened. I returned to the Commandant's, and seated myself as usual near Marie. Her father was absent and her mother busy with household duties. We spoke in subdued tones. Marie reproached me gently for the pain my quarrel with Alexis gave her. "My heart failed me," she said, "when I heard you were going to fight with swords. How strange men are! For a word, they are ready to strangle each other, and sacrifice, not only their own life, but even the honor and happiness of those who — I am sure you did not begin the quarrel? Alexis was the aggressor?"

"Why do you think so?"

“Because he is so sarcastic. I do not like him, and yet I would not displease him, although he is quite disagreeable to me.”

“What do you think, Marie, are you pleasing to him or not?”

Marie blushed. “It seems,” said she, “that I please him.”

“How do you know?”

“Because he made me an offer of marriage.”

“He made you an offer of marriage! When?”

“Last year, two months before your arrival.”

“You did not accept?”

“Evidently not, as you see. Alexis is a most intelligent man, of an excellent family and not without fortune, but the mere idea that beneath the crown, on my marriage day, I should be obliged to kiss him before every one! No! no! not for any thing in the world.”

Marie’s words opened my eyes. I understood the persistence of Alexis in aspersing her character. He had probably remarked our mutual inclination, and was trying to turn us from each other. The words which had provoked our quarrel seemed to me the more infamous, as instead of being a vulgar joke, it was deliberate calumny. The desire to punish this shameless liar became so strong that I waited impatiently the favorable moment. I had not long to wait. The next day, occupied composing an elegy, biting my pen in the expectation of a rhyme, Alexis knocked at my window. I put down my pen, took my sword, and went out of the house.

“Why defer?” said Alexis, “we are no longer watched, let us go down to the river-side; there none will hinder us.”

We set out in silence, and having descended a steep path, we stopped at the water’s edge and crossed swords. Alexis was more skillful than I in the use of arms, but I was stronger and bolder. Mons. Beaupre, who had been, amongst other things, a soldier, had taught me fencing. Alexis did not expect to find in me an adversary of so dangerous a character.

For some minutes neither gained any advantage over the other, but at last noticing that Alexis was growing weak, I attacked him energetically, and almost drove him backward into the river, when suddenly I heard my name pronounced in a high voice. Turning my head rapidly, I saw Saveliitch running toward me down the path. As I turned my head, I felt a sharp thrust in the breast under the right shoulder, and I fell, unconscious.

V. LOVE.

When I came to myself, I neither knew what had happened nor where I was. I felt very weak; the room was strange, there was Saveliitch standing before me, a light in his hand, and some one arranging the bandages that bound my chest and shoulder. Gradually I recalled my duel, and easily divined that I had been wounded. The door at this instant moaned gently on its hinges.

"Well, how is he?" whispered a voice that made me start.

"Still in the same state," sighed Saveliitch, "now unconscious four days." I wanted to turn on my bed, but I had not the strength. "Where am I?" said I, with effort, "who is here?" Marie approached, and bending over me said, gently, "How do you feel?"

"Thank God, I am well. Is that Marie? tell me — ?" I could not finish. Saveliitch uttered a cry of joy, his delight showing plainly in his face. "He recovers! he recovers! Thanks to thee, O God! Peter, how you frightened me! — four days! It is easy to talk — !"

Marie interrupted him: "Do not, Saveliitch, speak too much to him; he is still very weak." She went out, shutting the door noiselessly. I must be in the Commandant's house, or Marie could not come to see me. I wished to question Saveliitch, but the old man shook his head and put his fingers in his ears. I closed my eyes from ill-humor — and fell asleep.

Upon awaking, I called Saveliitch; instead of him, I saw before me Marie, whose gentle voice greeted me. I seized her hand and bathed it with my tears. Marie did not withdraw it, and suddenly I felt upon my cheek the impression, humid and delicious, of her lips! A thrill shot through my whole being.

"Dear, good Marie, be my wife, and make me the happiest of men!"

"In the name of heaven be calm," she said, withdrawing her hand, "your wound may reopen; for my sake be careful."

She left the room. I was in a daze. I felt life returning. "She will be mine!" I kept repeating, "she loves me!" I grew better, hour by hour. The barber of the regiment dressed my wounds, for there was no other physician in the fortress, and thank God, he did not merely play the doctor. Youth and nature completed the cure.

The Commandant's whole family surrounded me with care. Marie scarcely ever left me. I need not say that I took the first favorable moment to continue my interrupted declaration. This time Marie listened with more patience. She frankly acknowledged her affection for me. And added that her parents would be happy in her happiness; "but," she continued, "think well of it? Will there be no objection on the part of your family?"

I did not doubt my mother's tenderness, but knowing my father's character, I foresaw that my love would not be received by him favorably, and that in all probability he would treat it as one of my youthful follies. This I avowed plainly to Marie, but nevertheless I resolved to write to my

father as eloquently as possible, and ask his blessing on our marriage. I showed the letter to Marie, who thought it so touching and convincing that she did not doubt of success, and abandoned herself, with all the confidence of youth and love, to the feelings of her heart.

I made peace with Alexis in the first days of my convalescence. Ivan Mironoff said, reproaching me for the duel: "You see, Peter, I ought to put you under arrest, but indeed you have been well punished without that. Alexis is, by my orders, under guard in the barn, and his sword is under lock and key in Basilia's keeping."

I was too happy to harbor spite, so I entreated for Alexis, and the kind Commandant, with his wife's permission, consented to set him at liberty. Alexis came at once to see me. He expressed regret for all that had happened, confessing that the fault was all his, and begged me to forget the past. Being naturally incapable of revenge, I pardoned him, forgiving both our quarrel and my wound. In his calumny I now saw the irritation of wounded vanity and despised love. I generously forgave my unfortunate rival. As soon as completely cured I returned to my lodging. I awaited impatiently the reply to my letter, not daring to hope, yet trying to stifle all sad presentiments. I had not yet had an explanation with Basilia and her husband, but my suit could not surprise them. Neither Marie nor I had concealed our feelings, and we were sure in advance of their consent.

At last, one pleasant day Saveliitch came to my room, letter in hand. The address was written in my father's hand. This sight prepared me for something grave, for usually my mother wrote me, and he only added a few lines at the end. Long I hesitated to break the seal. I read again and again the solemn superscription:

"To my Son,
Peter Grineff,
Principality of Orenbourg,
Fortress of Belogorsk."

I tried to discover by my father's writing his mood of mind when he wrote that letter. At last I broke that seal. I saw from the first lines that our hopes were crushed! Here is the letter:

"MY SON PETER: We received the 15th of this month the letter in which you ask our paternal benediction and consent to your marriage with Mironoff's daughter. Not only have I no intention of giving either my consent or benediction, but I have a great mind to go to you and punish you for your childish follies, notwithstanding your officer's rank, because you have proved that you are not worthy to bear the sword which was given you for the defense of your country, and not for the purpose of fighting a duel with a fool of your own stamp. I shall write instantly to Andrew Karlovitch to transfer you from the fortress of Belogorsk to some still more distant place. Upon hearing of your wound your mother was taken ill, and is still confined to her bed. What will become of you? I pray God to reform you, but can scarcely hope for so much from his goodness. Your father, A.G."

The harsh expressions which my father had not spared, wounded me sorely; the contempt with which he treated Marie seemed to me as unjust as it was undignified. Then the mere idea of being sent from this fortress alarmed me; but above all, I grieved for my mother's illness. Saveliitch came in for a share of my indignation, not doubting but that he informed my parents of the duel. After having paced up and down my little chamber, I stopped suddenly before the old man and said: "It seems that it is not enough that you caused my wound, and brought me almost to the brink of the grave, but that you want to kill my mother too!"

Saveliitch was as motionless as if lightning had struck him. "Have mercy on me! my lord," said he, "what do you deign to tell me? I caused your wound? God sees that I was running to put my breast before you, to receive the sword of Alexis. This cursed age of mine hindered me. But what have I done to your mother?"

"What have you done? Who charged you to write an accusation against me? Were you taken into my service to play the spy on me?"

"I write an accusation?" replied the old man, quite broken down, "O God! King of heaven! Here, read what the master writes me, and you shall see if I denounced thee." At the same time he drew from his pocket a letter which he gave me, and I read what follows:

"Shame upon you, you old dog, that notwithstanding my strict orders you wrote me nothing regarding my son, leaving to strangers the duty of telling me of his follies. Is it thus you do your duty and fulfill your master's will? I shall send you to keep the pigs, for having concealed the truth, and for your condescension to the young man. Upon receipt of this letter inform me immediately of the state of his health, which is, I hear, improving, and tell me precisely the place of his wound, and whether he has well attended."

Evidently Saveliitch was not in the wrong, and I had offended him by my suspicions and reproaches. I asked him to forgive me, but the old man was inconsolable. "See to what I have lived!" he repeated; "see what thanks I have merited from my masters for all my long services! I am an old dog! I am a swine-herd, and more than all that, I caused your wound. No, no, Peter, I am not in fault, it is the cursed Frenchman who taught thee to play with these steel blades, and to stamp and dance, as if by thrusting and dancing you could defend yourself from a bad man."

Now, then, who had taken the pains to accuse me to my father? The General, Andrew Karlovitch? He did not trouble himself much about me; moreover, Ivan Mironoff had not thought it worth while to report my duel to him. My suspicions fell on Alexis. He only would find some advantage in this information, the consequence of which might be my dismissal from the fortress and separation from the Commandant's family. I went to tell every thing to Marie. She met me on the doorstep.

"What has happened to you? how pale you are!"

"All's over," I replied, handing her my father's letter.

It was her turn to blanch. Having read the letter she returned it, and said in a trembling voice: "It was not my destiny. Your parents do not wish me

in their family; may the will of God be done! He knows better than we what is best for us. There is nothing to be done in the matter, Peter; you, at least, may be happy."

"It shall not be so," I exclaimed, taking her hand. "You love me, I am ready for any fate. Let us go and throw ourselves at your parents' feet. They are simple people; they are neither haughty nor cruel; they will give us their benediction; we will marry; and in time, I am sure, we will soften my father. My mother will intercede for us, and he will pardon me."

"No, Peter, I will not marry you without the benediction of your parents. You would not be happy without their blessing. Let us submit to the will of God. If you meet another bride, if you love her, may God be with you! I, Peter, I will pray for both of you." Tears interrupted her, and she went away; I wished to follow her into the house, but I was not master of myself, and I went to my own quarters. I was plunged in melancholy, when Saveliitch came to interrupt my reflections.

"There, my lord," said he, presenting me a sheet of paper all covered with writing, "see if I am a spy on my master, and if I try to embroil father and son."

I took the paper from his hand; it was his reply to my father's letter.

I could not help smiling at the old man's letter. I was in no condition to write to my father, and to calm my mother his letter seemed sufficient.

From that day, Marie scarcely spoke to me, and even tried to avoid me. The Commandant's house became insupportable, and I accustomed myself, little by little, to remain alone in my room. At first Basilia reasoned with me, but seeing my persistency she let me alone. I saw Ivan Mironoff only when the service required it. I had but rare interviews with Alexis, for whom my antipathy increased, because I thought I discovered in him a secret enmity which confirmed my suspicions. Life became a burden; I gave myself up to a melancholy which was fed by solitude and inaction. Love burned on in silence and tortured me, more and more. I lost all taste for reading and literature; I let myself become completely depressed; and I feared that I should either become a lunatic or rush into dissipation, when events occurred that had great influence on my life and give a strong and healthy tone to my mind.

VI. POUGATCHEFF.

Before beginning the recital of the strange events of which I was witness, I ought to say a few words about the situation of affairs toward the end of the year 1773. The rich and vast province of Orenbourg was inhabited by a number of tribes, half civilized, who had just recognized the sovereignty of the Russian Czars. Their continual revolts, their impatience of law and civilized life, their inconstancy and cruelty, demanded on the part of the government a constant watchfulness to reduce them to obedience. Fortresses had been erected in favorable places, and Cossacks, the former possessors of the shores of the Iaik, in many places formed a part of the garrisons. But these very Cossacks, who should have guaranteed the peace and security of their districts, were restless and dangerous subjects of the empire. In 1772 a riot occurred in one of their chief towns. This riot was caused by the severity of the measures employed by General Traubenberg to bring the army to obedience. The only result of these measures was the barbarous murder of Traubenberg, a change of Imperial officers, and in the end, by force of grape and canister, the suppression of the riot.

This happened shortly before my arrival at the fortress of Belogorsk. Then all seemed quiet. But the authorities had too easily believed in the feigned repentance of the rebels, who nursed their hate in silence, and only awaited a propitious moment to recommence the struggle.

I return to my story. Once evening, it was in the month of October, 1773, I was alone in the house, listening to the whistling of the Autumn winds, and watching the clouds gliding rapidly before the moon. An order came from the Commandant, calling me to his presence. I went that instant. I found there Alexis, Ignatius and the Corporal of the Cossacks, but neither the wife nor daughter of the Commandant. My chief bade me good evening, had the door closed, and every one seated, except the Corporal who remained standing; then he drew a paper from his pocket and said to us:

“Gentlemen, important news! Listen to what the General writes.” He put on his spectacles and read:

“To the Commandant of the Fortress of Belogorsk, Captain Mironoff. *Confidential*. I hereby inform you that the deserter and turbulent Cossack of the Don, Imiliane Pougatcheff, after having been guilty of the unpardonable insolence of usurping the name of the deceased Emperor Peter III, has assembled a troop of brigands, disturbed the villages of the Iaik, and has even taken and destroyed several fortresses, at the same time committing everywhere robberies and assassinations. Therefore, upon the receipt of this, you will, Captain, bethink you of the measures to be taken to repulse the said robber and usurper; and if possible, in case he turn his arms against the fortress confided to your care, to completely exterminate him.”

“It is easy to talk,” said the Commandant, taking off his spectacles, and folding the paper; “but we must use every precaution. The rascal seems strong, and we have only 130 men, even adding the Cossacks, upon whom

there is no dependence, be it said without reproach to thee, Maxim.” The Corporal of the Cossacks smiled. “Gentlemen, let us do our part; be vigilant, post sentries, establish night patrols; in case of an attack, shut the gates and call out the soldiers. Maxim, watch well your Cossacks. It is necessary to examine the cannon and clean it; and above all to keep the secret, that no one in the fortress should know any thing before the time.”

Having given his orders, Ivan Mironoff dismissed us. I went out with Alexis, speculating on what we had heard. “What do you think of it? How will this end?” I asked him.

“God knows,” he replied, “we shall see. At present there is no danger.” And he began, as if thinking, to hum a French air.

Notwithstanding our precautions the news of the apparition of Pougatcheff spread through the fortress. However great the respect of Ivan Mironoff for his wife, he would not reveal to her for anything in the world a military secret. When he had received the General’s letter he very adroitly rid himself of Basilia by telling her that the Greek priest had received from Orenbourg extraordinary news which he kept a great mystery. Thereupon Basilia desired to pay a visit to Accouline, the clergyman’s wife, and by Mironoff’s advice Marie went also. Master of the situation, Ivan Mironoff locked up the maid in the kitchen and assembled us.

Basilia came home without news, and learned that during her absence a council of war had been held, and that Polacca was imprisoned in the kitchen. She suspected that her husband had deceived her, and overwhelmed him with questions. He was prepared for the attack, and stoutly replied to his curious better-half:

“You see, my dear, the women about the country have been using straw to kindle their fires; now as that might be dangerous, I assembled my officers, and gave them orders to prevent these women lighting fires with anything but fagots and brushwood.”

“And why did you lock up Polacca in the kitchen till my return?” Ivan Mironoff had not foreseen that question, and muttered some incoherent words. Basilia saw at once her husband’s perfidy, but knowing that she could extract nothing from him at that moment, she ceased her questioning, and spoke of the pickled cucumbers which Accouline knew how to prepare in a superior fashion. That night Basilia never closed an eye, unable to imagine what it was that her husband knew that she could not share with him.

The next day, returning from mass, she saw Ignatius cleaning the cannon, taking out rags, pebbles, bits of wood, and all sorts of rubbish which the small boys had stuffed there. “What means these warlike preparations?” thought the Commandant’s wife? “Is an attack from the Kirghis feared? Is it possible that Mironoff would hide from me so mere a trifle?” She called Ignatius, determined to know the secret that excited her woman’s curiosity. Basilia began by making some remarks about household matters, like a judge who begins his interrogation with questions foreign to the affair, in order to reassure the accused, and throw him off his guard.

Then having paused a moment she sighed and shook her head, saying: "O God! what news! what news! What will become of us?"

"My dear lady," said Ignatius, "the Lord is merciful; we have soldiers and plenty of powder; I have cleaned the cannon. We may repulse this Pougatcheff. If the Lord is with us, the wolf will eat no one here."

"Who is Pougatcheff?" asked the Commandant's wife.

Ignatius saw that he had gone too far, and he bit his tongue. But it was too late. Basilia constrained him to tell her all, having given her word to keep the secret. She kept her word, and indeed told no one except Accoulina, whose cow was still on the steppe and might be carried off by the brigands. Soon every one talked of Pougatcheff, the current reports being very different. The Commandant sent out the Corporal to pick up information about him in all the neighboring villages and little forts. The Corporal returned after an absence of two days, and declared that he had seen on the steppe, sixty versts from the fortress, a great many fires, and that he had heard the Bashkirs say that an innumerable force was advancing. He could not tell anything definitely, having been afraid to venture farther.

Great agitation was soon after this observed amongst the Cossacks of our garrison. They assembled in groups in the streets, speaking in a low tone amongst themselves, and dispersing as soon as they perceived a dragoon or other Russian soldier. Orders were given to watch them. Zoulac, a baptized Kalmouk, made a very grave revelation to the Commandant. According to the Kalmouk, the Cossack made a false report; for to his comrades the perfidious Corporal said that he had advanced to the rebel camp, had been presented to their rebel chief, had kissed his hand and conversed with him. The Commandant ordered the Corporal under arrest, and replaced him by the Kalmouk. This change was received by the Cossacks with visible discontent. They openly murmured and Ignatius, when executing the Commandant's order, heard them say, with his own ears, "wait, garrison rat, wait!"

The Commandant decided to examine the Corporal that same day, but he had escaped, no doubt, by the aid of his brother Cossacks. Another event increased the Captain's uneasiness. A Bashkir was seized bearing seditious letters. Upon this occasion, the Commandant decided to call at once a council, and in order to do so, wished to send away his wife under some specious pretext. But as Mironoff was the simplest and most truthful of men, he could think of no other device than that already employed.

"You see, Basilia," said he, coughing several times, "Father Garasim has, it is said, been to the city —"

"Silence! silence!" interrupted his wife; "you are going to call another council and talk in my absence of Imiliane Pougatcheff, but this time you can not deceive me."

The Captain stared; "Eh! well! my dear," said he, "since you know all, stay; we may as well speak before you."

"You cannot play the fox," said his wife; "send for the officers."

We assembled again. The Commandant read, before his wife, Pougatcheff's proclamation, written by some half-educated Cossack. The brigand declared to us his intention of marching directly upon our fortress, inviting the Cossacks and soldiers to join him, and advising the chiefs not to resist, threatening, in that case, extremest torture. The proclamation was written in vulgar but energetic terms, and must have produced an impression upon simple-minded people.

"What a rascal!" exclaimed the Captain's wife. "Just see what he proposes. To go out and meet him and lay our flags at his feet. Ah! the son of a dog! He does not know that we have been forty years in service, and that, thank God, we have seen all sorts of military life. Is it possible to find a Commandant cowardly enough to obey this robber?"

"It ought not to be," replied the Captain, "but it is said that the villain has taken possession of several fortress."

"It appears he is quite strong," said Alexis.

"We shall instantly know his real force," continued the Commandant; "Basilia, give me the key of the garret. Ignatius, bring the Bashkir here, and tell Zoulac to bring the rods."

"Wait a little, my dear," said the Commandant's wife, leaving her seat; "let me take Marie out of the house, or else she will hear the screams and be frightened. And, to tell the truth, I am, myself, not very curious about such investigations. Until I see you again, adieu."

Torture was then so rooted in the customs of justice, that the humane Ukase of Catherine II, who had ordered its abolition, remained long without effect. It was thought that the confession of the accused was indispensable to his condemnation, an idea not only unreasonable, but contrary to the most simple good sense in matters of jurisprudence; for if the denial of the accused is not accepted as proof of his innocence, the confession which is torn from him by torture ought to serve still less as proof of his guilt. Even now I sometimes hear old judges regret the abolition of this barbarous custom. But in the time of our story no one doubted the necessity of torture, neither the judges nor the accused themselves. For this reason the Captain's order did not astonish any of us. Ignatius went for the Bashkir, and a few minutes later he was brought to the waiting-room. The Commandant ordered him into the council-room where we were.

The Bashkir crossed the threshold with difficulty, for his feet were shackled. He took off his high Cossack cap and stood near the door. I looked at him and shuddered, involuntarily. Never shall I forget that man; he seemed at least seventy years of age, and had neither nose nor ears. His head was shaved; a few sparse gray hairs took the place of beard. He was small of stature, thin and bent; but his Tartar eyes still sparkled.

"Eh! eh!" said the Commandant, who recognized by these terrible signs one of the rebels punished in 1741. "You are an old wolf, I see; you have already been caught in our snares. This is not your first offense, for your head is so well planed off."

The old Bashkir was silent, and looked at the Commandant with an air of complete imbecility.

"Well! why are you silent?" continued the Captain; "do you not understand Russian? Zoulac, ask him, in your tongue, who sent him into our fortress."

The Kalmouk repeated in the Tartar language the Captain's question. But the Bashkir looked at him with the same expression and without answering a word.

"I will make you answer," exclaimed the Captain, with a Tartar oath. "Come, take off his striped dressing-gown, his fool's garment, and scourge him well."

Two pensioners commenced to remove the clothing from the shoulders of the old man. Then, sore distress was vividly depicted on the face of the unfortunate man. He looked on all sides, like a poor little animal caught by children. But when one of the pensioners seized his hands to turn them around his neck and lift up the old man on his shoulders; when Zoulac took the rods and raised his hand to strike, then the Bashkir uttered a low, but penetrating moan, and raising his head, opened his mouth, where, in place of a tongue, moved a short stump!

We were still debating, when Basilia rushed breathlessly into the room with a terrified air. "What has happened to you?" asked the Commandant, surprised.

"Misfortune! misfortune!" replied she. "A fort was taken this morning; Father Garasim's boy has just returned. He saw how it was captured. The Commandant and all the officers are hanged, all the soldiers made prisoners, and the rebels are coming here."

This unexpected news made a deep impression on me, for I knew the Commandant of that fortress. Two months ago, the young man, traveling with his bride coming from Orenbourg, had paid a visit to Captain Mironoff. The fort he commanded was only twenty-five versts from ours, so that from hour to hour we might expect an attack from Pougatcheff.

My imagination pictured the fate of Marie, and I trembled for her.

"Listen, Captain Mironoff," said I to the Commandant, "our duty is to defend the fortress to our last breath; that is understood, but the safety of the women must be thought of; send them to a more distant fortress, — to Orenbourg, if the route be still open."

Mironoff turned to his wife. "You see my dear! indeed it would be well to send you somewhere farther off until we shall have defeated the rebels."

"What nonsense!" replied she. "Where is the fortress that balls have not reached? In what respect is our fortress unsafe? Thank God, we have lived here twenty and one years. We have seen Bashkirs and Kirghis; Pougatcheff can not be worse than they."

"My dear, stay if you will, since your faith is so great in our fortress. But what shall we do with Marie? It will be all well if we can keep off the robber, or if help reach us in time. If the fortress, however, be taken — "

Basilia could only stammer a few words, and was silent, choked by her feelings.

“No, Basilia,” continued the Commandant, who remarked that his words made a deep impression on his wife, perhaps for the first time in his life, “it is not advisable that Marie stay here. Let us send her to Orenbourg, to her god-mother’s. That is a well-manned fortress, with stone walls and plenty of cannon. I would advise you to go there yourself; think what might happen to you were your fortress to be taken by assault.”

“Well! well! let us send Marie away,” said the Captain’s wife, “but do not dream of asking me to go, for I will do nothing of the kind. It is not becoming, in my old age, to separate myself from thee and seek a solitary grave in a strange place. We have lived together; let us die together.”

“You are right,” said the Commandant. “Go, and equip Marie; there is no time to lose; tomorrow, at the dawn of day, she shall set out; she must have a convoy, though indeed there is no one to spare. Where is she?”

“She is at Accoulina’s,” said his wife. “She fainted upon hearing that the fortress had been taken.”

Basilia went to prepare for her daughter’s departure. The discussion still continued at the Commandant’s, but I took no further part in it. Marie reappeared at supper with eyes red from tears. We supped in silence and rose from the table sooner than usual. Having bade the family good night, each one sought his room. I forgot my sword, on purpose, and went back for it; I anticipated finding Marie alone. In truth she met me at the door and gave me my sword.

“Adieu, Peter,” she said, weeping, “they send me to Orenbourg. Be happy. Perhaps God will permit us to meet again; if not — ”

She burst into tears. I folded her in my arms.

“Adieu, my angel!” I said, “adieu my cherished, my beloved; what ever happens, be sure that my last thought, my last prayer, will be for thee.” Leaning of my breast, Marie wept. I kissed her and rushed out.

VII. THE ASSAULT.

I could not sleep during the night, and did not even undress. I intended to be at the fortress gates at day-dawn to see Marie set out, and bid her a last adieu. I was completely changed. Excitement was less painful than my former melancholy, for with the grief of separation there mingled vague but secret hope, impatient expectation of danger, and a high ambition. Night passed quickly. I was on the point of going out, when my door opened, and the Corporal entered, saying that our Cossacks had deserted the fortress during the night, forcing with them Zoulac, the Christian Kalmouk, and that all around our ramparts, unknown people were riding. The idea that Marie had not been able to get off, froze me with terror. I gave, in haste, a few instructions to the Corporal, and ran to the Commandant's.

Day was breaking. I was going down the street swiftly when I heard my name called. I stopped.

"Where are you going, dare I ask?" said Ignatius, catching up with me; "the Captain is on the rampart and sends me for you. Pougatcheff is here."

"Is Marie gone?" I said, shuddering.

"She was not ready in time; communication with Orenbourg is cut off; the fortress is surrounded. Peter, this is bad work."

We went to the rampart — a small height formed by nature and fortified by a palisade. The garrison was there under arms. The cannon had been dragged there the evening before. The Commandant was walking up and down before his little troop — the approach of danger had restored to the old warrior extraordinary vigor. On the steppe, not far from the fortress, there were some twenty horsemen, who looked like Cossacks; but amongst them were a few Bashkirs, easily recognized by their caps and quivers. The Commandant passed before the ranks of his small army and said to the soldiers: "Come, boys, let us fight today for our mother the Empress, and show the world that we are brave men and faithful to our oath."

The soldiers, with loud shouts, testified their good will. Alexis was standing by me examining the enemy. The people on the steppe, seeing, no doubt, some movement in our fort, collected in groups and spoke amongst themselves. The Commandant ordered Ignatius to point the cannon upon them, he himself applying the light. The ball whistled over their heads without doing them any harm. The horsemen dispersed at once, setting off on a gallop, and the steppe became deserted. At this moment Basilia appeared on the rampart, followed by Marie, who would not leave her.

"Well," said the Captain's wife, "how is the battle going? Where is the enemy?"

"The enemy is not far off," replied Ivan, "but if God wills it, all will be well; and thou, Marie, art thou afraid?"

"No, papa," said Marie, "I am more afraid by myself in the house." She glanced at me, and tried to smile. I pressed my sword, remembering that I had received it from her on the preceding eve, as if for her defense. My

heart was on fire. I fancied myself her knight, and longed to prove myself worthy of her trust. I awaited the decisive moment impatiently.

Suddenly coming from behind a hill, eight versts from the fortress, appeared new groups of horsemen, and soon the whole steppe was covered by men armed with lances and arrows. Amongst them, wearing a scarlet cafetan, sword in hand, could be distinguished a man mounted on a white horse. This was Pougatcheff himself. He halted, was surrounded by his followers, and very soon, probably by his orders, four men left the crowd and galloped to our ramparts. We recognized among them our traitors. One of them raised a sheet of paper above his cap and another carried on the point of his lance Zoulac's head, which he threw to us over the palisade. The poor Kalmouk's head rolled at the feet of the Commandant.

The traitors shouted to us: "Do not fire, come out and receive the Czar. The Czar is here."

"Fire!" shouted the Captain as sole reply.

The soldiers discharged their pieces. The Cossack who held the letter, tottered and fell from his horse; the others fled. I glanced at Marie. Petrified by horror at the sight of the Kalmouk's head, dizzy from the noise of the discharge, she seemed lifeless. The Commandant ordered the Corporal to take the letter from the hand of the dead Cossack. Ignatius sallied out and returned, leading by the bridle the man's horse. He gave the letter to Ivan, who read it in a low voice and tore it up. Meantime the rebels were preparing for an attack. Very soon balls whistled about our ears, and arrows fell around us, buried deep in the ground.

"Basilia," said the Captain, "women have nothing to do here; take away Marie; you see the child is more dead than alive." Basilia, whom the sound of the balls had rendered more yielding, glanced at the steppe where much movement was visible, and said: "Ivan, life and death are from God; bless Marie; come, child, to thy father."

Pale and trembling, Marie came and knelt, bending low before him. The old Commandant made three times the sign of the cross over her, then raising, kissed her, and said in a broken voice: "Oh! my dear Marie! pray to God, he will never abandon thee. If an honest man seek thee, may God give you both love and goodness. Live together as we have lived; my wife and I. Adieu! my dear Marie! Basilia, take her away quickly."

Marie put her arms around his neck and sobbed. The Captain's wife, in tears, said: "Embrace us also; adieu, Ivan; if ever I have crossed you, forgive me."

"Adieu! adieu! my dear," said the Commandant, kissing his old companion. "Come! enough! go to the house, and if you have time dress Marie in her best; let her wear a sarafan, embroidered in gold, as is our custom for burial."

Ivan Mironoff returned to us, and fixed all his attention upon the enemy. The rebels collected around their chief and suddenly began to advance. "Be firm, boys," said the Commandant, "the assault begins." At that instant savage war-cries were heard. The rebels were approaching the fortress with

their accustomed fleetness. Our cannon was charged with grape and canister. The Commandant let them come within short range, and again put a light to his piece. The shot struck in the midst of the force, which scattered in every direction. Only their chief remained in advance, and he, waving his sabre, seemed to be rallying them. Their piercing shouts, which had ceased an instant, redoubled again. "Now, children," ordered the Captain, "open the gate, beat the drum, and advance! Follow me, for a sortie!"

The Captain, Ignatius and I were in an instant beyond the parapet. But the frightened garrison had not moved from the square. "What are you doing, my children?" shouted the Captain; "if we must die, let us die; the imperial service demands it!"

At this moment the rebels fell upon us, and forced the entrance to the citadel. The drum was silent; the garrison threw down their arms. I had been knocked down, but I rose and entered, pell-mell, with the crowds into the fortress. I saw the Commandant wounded on the head, and closed upon by a small troop of bandits, who demanded the keys. I was running to his aid when several powerful Cossacks seized me and bound me with their long sashes, crying out: "Wait there, traitor to the Czar, till we know what to do with you."

We were dragged along the streets. The inhabitants came out of their houses offering bread and salt. The bells were rung. Suddenly, shouts announced that the Czar was on the square, awaiting to receive the oaths of the prisoners.

Pougatcheff was seated in an arm-chair on the steps of the Commandant's house. He was robed in an elegant Cossack cafetan embroidered on the seams. A high cap of martin-skin, ornamented with gold tassels, covered his brow almost to his flashing eyes. His face seemed to me not unknown. Cossack chiefs surrounded him. Father Garasim, pale and trembling, stood, the cross in his hand, at the foot of the steps, and seemed to supplicate in silence for the victims brought before him.

On the square itself, a gallows was hastily erected. When we approached, the Bashkirs opened a passage through the crowd and presented us to Pougatcheff. The bells ceased; the deepest silence prevailed. "Which is the Commandant?" asked the usurper. Our Corporal came out of the crowd and pointed to Mironoff. Pougatcheff looked at the old man with a terrible expression, and said to him: "How did you dare to oppose me, your emperor?"

The Commandant, weakened by his wound, collected all his energy, and said, in a firm but faint voice: "You are not my emperor; you are a usurper and a brigand."

Pougatcheff frowned and raised his white handkerchief. Immediately the old Captain was seized by Cossacks and dragged to the gibbet. Astride the cross-beam of the gallows, sat the mutilated Bashkirs who we had questioned; he held a rope in his hand, and I saw, an instant after, poor Ivan Mironoff suspended in the air. Then Ignatius was brought up before

Pougatcheff.

"Take the oath to the emperor, Peter Fedorovitch."

"You are not our emperor," replied the Lieutenant, repeating his Captain's words, "you are a brigand and a usurper."

Pougatcheff again made a signal with his handkerchief, and the kind Ignatius hung beside his ancient chief. It was my turn. I looked boldly at Pougatcheff, preparing to repeat the words of my brave comrades, when to my inexpressible astonishment I saw Alexis amongst the rebels. He had had time to cut his hair round, and exchange his uniform for a Cossack cafetan. He approached Pougatcheff and whispered to him. "Let him be hung," said Pougatcheff, not deigning to look at me. A rope was put around my neck. I uttered a prayer to God in a low voice, expressing sincere repentance for my sins, and imploring him to save all those dear to my heart. I was led beneath the gibbet. A shout was heard, "Stop! Stop!" The executioners paused. I looked. Saveliitch was kneeling at Pougatcheff's feet. "O my lord and master," said my dear old serf, "what do you want with that nobleman's child? Set him free, you will get a good ransom for his life; but for an example, and to frighten the rest, command that I, an old man, shall be hung."

Pougatcheff made a sign. They unbound me at once. "Our emperor pardons you," they said. At the moment I did not know that my deliverance was a cause for joy or for sorrow. My mind was too confused. I was taken again before the usurper and made to kneel at his feet. Pougatcheff offered me his muscular hand. "Kiss his hand! Kiss his hand!" cried out all around me. But I would have preferred the most atrocious torture to a degradation so infamous. "My dear Peter," whispered Saveliitch, who was standing behind me, "do not play the obstinate; what does it cost? Kiss the brigand's hand."

I did not move. Pougatcheff drew back his hand: "His lordship is stupefied with joy; raise him up," said he. I was at liberty. Then I witnessed the continuation of the infamous comedy.

The inhabitants began to take the oath. They went one by one to kiss the cross and salute the usurper. After them came the garrison soldiers. The company's tailor, armed with his great blunt-pointed shears, cut off their queues; they shook their heads and kissed the hand of Pougatcheff, who declared them pardoned and received into his troops. This lasted for nearly three hours. At last Pougatcheff rose from his arm-chair and went down the steps, followed by his chiefs. A white horse richly caparisoned was led to him; tow Cossacks helped him into the saddle. He signified to Father Garasim that he would dine with him. At this moment wild heart-rending shrieks from a woman filled the air. Basilia, without her mantle, her hair in disorder, was dragged out on the steps; one the brigands had on her mantle; the others were carrying away her chests, her linen, and other household goods. "O good men," she cried, "let me go, take me to Ivan Mironoff." Suddenly she saw the gibbet and recognized her husband. "Wretches," she cried, "What have you done? O my light, Ivan! Brave soldier! no Prussian

ball, nor Turkish sabre killed thee, but a vile condemned deserter.”

“Silence that old sorceress,” said Pougatcheff.

A young Cossack struck her with his sabre on the head. She fell dead at the foot of the steps. Pougatcheff rode off, all the people following.

VIII. THE UNEXPECTED VISIT.

I stood in the vacant square, unable to collect my thoughts, disturbed by so many terrible emotions. Uncertainty about Marie's fate tortured me. Where is she? Is she concealed? Is her retreat safe? I went to the Commandant's house. It was in frightful disorder; the chairs, tables, presses had been burned up and the dishes were in fragments. I rushed up the little stairs leading to Marie's room, which I entered for the first time in my life. A lamp still burned before the shrine which had enclosed the sacred objects revered by all true believers. The clothes-press was empty, the bed broke up. The robbers had not taken the little mirror hanging between the door and the window. What had become of the mistress of this simple, virginal abode? A terrible thought flashed through my mind. Marie in hands of the brigands! My heart was torn, and I cried aloud: "Marie! Marie!" I heard a rustle. Polacca, quite pale, came from her hiding-place behind the clothes-press.

"Ah! Peter," said she, clasping her hands, "what a day! what horrors!"

"Marie?" I asked impatiently, "Marie — where is she?"

"The young lady is alive," said the maid, "concealed at Accoulina's, at the house of the Greek priest."

"Great God!" I cried, with terror, "Pougatcheff is there!"

I rushed out of the room, made a bound into the street and ran wildly to the priest's house. It was ringing with songs, shouts and laughter. Pougatcheff was at table there with his men. Polacca had followed me; I sent her in to call out Accoulina secretly. Accoulina came into the waiting-room, an empty bottle in her hand.

"In the name of heaven, where is Marie?" I asked with agitation.

"The little dove is lying on my bed behind the partition. Oh! Peter, what danger we have just escaped! The rascal had scarcely seated himself at table than the poor thing moaned. I thought I should die of fright. He heard her. 'Who is moaning in your room, old woman?' 'My niece, Czar.' 'Let me see your niece, old woman.' I saluted him humbly; 'My niece, Czar, has not strength to come before your grace.' 'Then I will go and see her.' And will you believe it, he drew the curtains and looked at our dove, with his hawk's eyes! The child did not recognize him. Poor Ivan Mironoff! Basilia! Why was Ignatius taken, and you spared? What do you think of Alexis? He has cut his hair and now hobnobs with them in there. When I spoke of my sick niece he looked at me as if he would run me through with his knife. But he said nothing, and we must be thankful for that."

The drunken shouts of the guests, and the voice of Father Garasim now resounded together; the brigands wanted more wine, and Accoulina was needed. "Go back to your house, Peter," said she, "woe to you, if you fall into his hands!"

She went to serve her guests; I, somewhat quieted, returned to my room. Crossing the square, I saw some Bashkirs stealing the boots from the bodies

of the dead. I restrained my useless anger. The brigands had been through the fortress and had pillaged the officers' houses.

I reached my lodging. Saveliitch met me at the threshold. "Thank God!" he cried. "Ah! master, the rascals have taken everything; but what matter, since they did not take your life. Did you not recognize their chief, master?"

"No, I did not; who is he?"

"What, my dear boy, have you forgotten the drunkard who cheated you out of the touloup the day of the snow-drift — a hare-skin touloup? — the rascal burst all the seams putting it on."

My eyes were opened. The resemblance between the guide and Pougatcheff was striking. I now understood the pardon accorded me. I recalled with gratitude the lucky incident. A youth's touloup given to a vagabond had saved my neck; and this drunkard, capturing fortress, had shaken the very empire.

"Will you not deign to eat something?" said Saveliitch, true to his instincts; "there is nothing in the house, it is true, but I will find something and prepare it for you."

Left alone, I began to reflect that not to leave the fortress, now subject to the brigand, or to join his troops, would be unworthy of an officer. Duty required me to go and present myself where I could still be useful to my country. But love counseled me, with no less force, to stay near Marie, to be her protector and champion. Although I foresaw a near and inevitable change in the march of events, still I could not, without trembling, contemplate the danger of her position.

My reflections were interrupted by the entrance of a Cossack, who came to announce that the "great Czar" called me to his presence. "Where is he?" I asked, preparing to obey. "In the commandant's house," replied the Cossack. "After dinner the Czar went to the vapor baths. It must be confessed that all his ways are imperial! He can do more than others; at dinner he deigned to eat two roast milk-pigs; afterward at the bath he endured the highest degree of heat; even the attendant could not stand it; he handed the brush to another and was restored to consciousness only by the application of cold water. It is said that in the bath, the marks of the true Czar were plainly seen on his breast — a picture of his own face and a double-headed eagle."

I did not think it necessary to contradict the Cossack, and I followed him to the Commandant's, trying to fancy in advance my interview with Pougatcheff, and its result. The reader may imagine that I was not quite at ease. Night was falling as I reached the house. The gibbet with its victims still stood, black and terrible. The poor body of our good Basilia was lying under the steps, near which two Cossacks mounted guard. He who had brought me, entered to announce my arrival; he returned at once, and led me to the room where the evening before I had taken leave of Marie. At a table covered with a cloth, and laden with bottles and glasses, sat Pougatcheff, surrounded by some ten Cossack chiefs in colored caps and

shirts, with flushed faces and sparkling eyes, the effect, no doubt, of the wine-cup.

I saw neither of our traitors, Alexis or the Corporal, amongst them.

"Ah! your lordship, it is you?" said their chief, on seeing me. "Be welcome! Honor and place at the table!"

The guests drew closer together. I took a place at the end of the table. My neighbor, a young Cossack of slender form and handsome face, poured out a bumper of brandy for me. I did not taste it. I was busy considering the assembly. Pougatcheff was seated in the place of honor, elbow on table, his heavy, black beard resting upon his muscular hand. His features, regular and handsome, had no ferocious expression. He often spoke to a man of some fifty years, calling him now Count, again Uncle. All treated each other as comrades, showing no very marked deference for their chief. They talked of the assault that morning; of the revolt, its success, and of their next operations. Each one boasted of his prowess, gave his opinions, and freely contradicted Pougatcheff. In this strange council of war, they resolved to march upon Orenbourg, a bold move, but justified by previous successes. The departure was fixed for the next day. Each one drank another bumper, and rising, took leave of Pougatcheff. I wished to follow them, but the brigand said: "Wait, I want to speak to you."

Pougatcheff looked at me fixedly in silence for a few seconds, winking his left eye with the most cunning, mocking expression. At last he burst into a long peal of laughter, so hearty, that I, just from seeing him, began to laugh, without knowing why.

"Well, my lord," said he, "confess that you were frightened, when my boys put the rope around your neck? The sky must have seemed to you then as big as a sheep-skin. And if not for your servant, you would have been swinging up there from the cross-beam; but at that very instant I recognized the old owl. Would you have thought that the man who led you to a shelter on the steppe was the great Czar himself?" Saying these words, he assumed a grave and mysterious air. "You have been very guilty," continued he, "but I have pardoned you, for having done me a kindness, when I was obliged to hide from my enemies. I shall load you with favors, when I shall have regained my empire. Do you promise to serve me with zeal?"

The bandit's question and impudence made me smile.

"Why do you laugh?" said he, frowning, "do you not believe that I am the great Czar? Answer frankly."

I was troubled. I could not recognize a vagabond as the emperor; to call him an impostor to his face was to doom myself to death; and the sacrifice which I was ready to make under the gibbet that morning, before all the people, in the first flush of indignation, seemed now a useless bravado. Pougatcheff awaited my answer in fierce silence. At last (I still remember with satisfaction that duty triumphed over human weakness) I replied to Pougatcheff.

"I will tell you the truth and let you decide. Should I recognize you as the Czar, as you are a man of intelligence, you would see that I am lying."

“Then who am I? in your opinion.”

“God knows, but whoever you are, you are playing a dangerous game.”

Pougatcheff gave me a sharp, quick glance. “You do not believe that I am the emperor, Peter III? Be it so. Have not bold men succeeded before me and obtained the crown? Think what you please about me, but stay with me. What matters it whom you serve? Success is right. Serve under me, and I will make you a field-marshal, a prince. What say you?”

“No,” said I. “I am a nobleman. I have taken an oath to her majesty, the Empress; I can not serve with you. If truly you wish me well, send me to Orenbourg.”

Pougatcheff reflected. “If I send you there, you will, at least, promise not to bear arms against me?”

“How can I promise that? If I am ordered to march against you, I must go. You are now a chief; you desire your subordinates to obey you. No, my life is in your hand; if you give me liberty, thanks; if you put me to death, may God judge you.”

My frankness pleased him. “Be it so,” said he, slapping me on the shoulders, “pardon or punish to the end. You can go the four quarters of the world, and do as you like. Come tomorrow, and bid me good-bye. Now go to bed — I require rest myself.”

I went out into the street. The night was clear and cold; the moon and stars shone out in all their brightness, lighting up the square and the gibbet. All was quiet and dark in the rest of the fortress. At the inn some lights were visible, and belated drinkers broke the stillness by their shouts. I glanced at Accoulina’s house; the doors and windows were closed, and all seemed perfectly quiet there. I went to my room, and found Saveliitch deploring my absence. I told him of my freedom. “Thanks to thee, O God!” said he, making the sign of the cross; “tomorrow we shall set out at daybreak. I have prepared something for you; eat and then sleep till morning, tranquil as if in the bosom of the Good Shepherd.”

I followed his advice, and after having supped, fell asleep on the bare floor, as fatigued in mind as in body.

IX. THE SEPARATION.

The drum awoke me early the next morning. I went out on the square. Pougatcheff's troops were there, falling into rank, around the gibbet, to which still hung the victims of yesterday. The Cossacks were mounted; the infantry and artillery, with our single gun, were accoutred ready for the march. The inhabitants were also assembled there awaiting the usurper. Before the steps of the Commandant's house a Cossack held by the bridle a magnificent white horse. My eyes sought the body of our good Basilia. It had been dragged aside and covered with an old bark mat. At last Pougatcheff came out on the steps, and saluted the crowd. All heads were bared. One of the chiefs handed him a bag of copper coin, which he threw by the handful among the people. Perceiving me in the crowd, he signed to me to approach.

"Listen," said he, "go at once to Orenbourg, and say from me, to the Governor and all the Generals, that I shall be there in a week. Counsel them to receive me with submission and filial love, otherwise they shall not escape the direst torture. A pleasant journey to you." The principal followers of Pougatcheff surrounded him, Alexis amongst others. The usurper turned to the people, and pointing to Alexis, said: "Behold your new Commandant; obey him in every thing; he is responsible for you and for the fortress."

The words made me shudder. What would become of Marie? Pougatcheff descended the steps and vaulted quickly into his saddle without the aid of his attendant Cossacks. At that moment Saveliitch came out of the crowd, approached the usurper, and presented him a sheet of paper.

"What is this?" asked Pougatcheff, with dignity.

"Read, you will deign to see," replied the serf.

Pougatcheff examined the paper. "You write very illegibly; where is my Secretary?"

A boy in corporal's uniform came running to the brigand. "Read aloud," said he. I was curious to know for what purpose the old man had written to Pougatcheff. The Secretary began to spell out in a loud voice what follows:

"Two dressing-gowns, one in percale, the other in striped silk, six roubles."

"What does this mean?" said Pougatcheff, frowning.

"Command him to read on," replied Saveliitch, with perfect calmness.

The Secretary continued: "One uniform in fine green cloth, seven roubles; one pair of white cloth pantaloons, five roubles; twelve shirts of Holland linen, with cuffs, ten roubles; one case containing a tea-service, two roubles."

"What nonsense is this?" said Pougatcheff.

"What have I to do with tea-sets and Holland cuffs?"

Saveliitch coughed to clear his voice, and began to explain: "That, my lord, deign to understand, is the bill of my master's goods carried off by the

thieves.”

“What thieves?” asked Pougatcheff, with a terrible air.

“Pardon me,” said Saveliitch. “Thieves? No, they were not thieves; my tongue slipped; yet your boys went through everything and carried off plenty. That can not be denied. Do not be angry. The horse has four legs and yet he stumbles. Command that he read to the end.”

“Well, read,” said Pougatcheff.

“One Persian blanket, one quilt of wadded silk, four roubles; one pelisse of fox-skin, covered with red ratine, forty roubles; one small touloup of hare-skin left with your grace, on the steppe, fifteen roubles.”

“What?” cried Pougatcheff, with flashing eyes.

I must say I feared for the old man, who was beginning new explanations, when the brigand interrupted him:

“How dare you annoy me with these trifles?” said he, snatching the paper from the Secretary and throwing it in the old man’s face. “You have been despoiled! old fool! great harm! You ought to thank God that you are not hanging up there, with the other rebels, both you and your master. I’ll give you a hare-skin touloup! Do you know that I will have you flayed alive, that touloups may be made of you?”

“As you please,” replied Saveliitch; “but I am not a free man, and I am responsible for my master’s goods.”

Pougatcheff, who was evidently playing the magnanimous, turned his head and set off without a word. Alexis and the other chiefs followed him. The whole army left the fortress in good order, the people forming an escort. I stayed alone on the square with Saveliitch, who held in his hand the bill and considered it with deep regret. I could not help laughing.

“Laugh, my lord, laugh, but when the household is to be furnished again, we shall see if it be a laughing matter.”

I went to learn of Marie Mironoff. Accoulina met me and told me a sad piece of news. During the night a burning fever had seized the poor girl. Accoulina took me into her chamber. The invalid was delirious and did not recognize me. I was shocked by the change in her countenance. The position of this sorrowing orphan, without defenders, alarmed me as much as my inability to protect grieved me. Alexis, above all, was to be feared. Chief, invested with the usurper’s authority, in the fortress with this unhappy girl, he was capable of any crime. What ought I to do to deliver her? To set out at once for Orenbourg, to hasten the deliverance of Belogorsk, and to co-operate in it, if possible. I took leave of Father Garasim and Accoulina, recommending to them Marie, who I already looked upon as my wife. I kissed the young girl’s hand, and left the room.

“Adieu, Peter Grineff,” said Accoulina. “Do not forget us. Except you, Marie has no support or consolation.” Choked by emotion, I did not reply. Out on the square, I stopped an instant before the gibbet. With bare head I reverently saluted the loyal dead, and took the road to Orenbourg, accompanied by Saveliitch, who would not abandon me. Thus plunged in thought, I walked on. Hearing horses galloping behind me, I turned my

head and saw a Cossack from the fortress leading a horse, and making signs to me that I should wait. I recognized our Corporal. Having caught up with us, he dismounted from his own horse, and giving me the bridle of the other, said: "Our Czar makes you a gift of a horse, and a pelisse from his own shoulder." To the saddle was tied a sheep-skin touloup. I put it on, mounted the horse, taking Saveliitch up behind me. "You see, my lord," said my serf, "that my petition to the bandit was not useless! And although this old hack and this peasant's touloup are not worth half what the rascals stole, yet they are better than nothing. 'A worthless dog yields even a handful of hair.'"

X. THE SIEGE.

Approaching Orenbourg, we saw a crowd of convicts, with shaved heads and faces disfigured by the pincers of the public executioner. At that time red-hot irons were applied to tear out the nostrils of the condemned. They were working at the fortifications of the place under the supervision of the garrison pensioners. Some carried away in wheel-barrows the rubbish that filled the ditch, others threw up the earth, while masons were examining and repairing the walls. The sentry stopped us at the gate and asked for our passports. When the sergeant heard that we were from Belogorsk he took me at once to the General, who was in his garden. I found him examining the apple trees, which autumnal winds had already despoiled of their leaves; assisted by an old gardener, he covered them carefully with straw. His face expressed calmness, good humor and health. He seemed very glad to see me, and questioned me about the terrible events I had witnessed. The old man heard me attentively, and whilst listening, cut off the dead branches.

"Poor Mironoff!" said he, when I had finished my story; "it is a pity; he was a brave officer; and Madame Mironoff a kind lady, an expert in pickling mushrooms. What has become of Marie, the Captain's daughter?"

"She is in the fortress, at the house of the Greek priest."

"Aye! aye! aye!" exclaimed the General. "That's bad, very bad; for it is impossible to depend upon the discipline of brigands."

I observed that the fortress of Belogorsk was not far off, and that probably his Excellency would send a detachment of troops to deliver the poor inhabitants.

The General shook his head, doubtfully. "We shall see! we shall see! there is plenty of time to talk about it; come, I beg you, to take tea with me. Tonight there will be a council of war; you can give us some precise information regarding this Pougatcheff and his army. Meantime, go and rest."

I went to my allotted quarters, where I found Saveliitch already installed. I awaited impatiently the hour indicated, and the reader may believe that I did not fail to be present at this council, which was to influence my whole life. I found at the General's a custom-house officer, the Director, as well as I can remember a little old man, red-faced and fat, wearing a robe of black watered silk. He questioned me about the fate of the Captain Mironoff, whom he called his chum, and often interrupted me by sententious remarks, which, if they did not prove him to be a man well versed in war, showed his natural intelligence and shrewdness. During this time other guests arrived. When all had taken their places, and to each had been offered a cup of tea, the General carefully stated the questions to be considered.

"Now, gentlemen," said he, "we must decide what action is to be taken against the rebels. Shall we act offensively, or defensively? Each of these ways has its advantages and disadvantages. Offensive war presents more

hope of a rapid extermination of the enemy, but defensive war is safer and offers fewer dangers. Let us then take the vote in legal order; that is, consult first the youngest in rank. Ensign," continued he, addressing me, "deign to give your opinion."

I rose, and in a few words depicted Pougatcheff and his army. I affirmed that the usurper was not in a condition to resist disciplined forces. My opinion was received by the civil service employes with visible discontent. They saw nothing in it but the levity of a young man. A murmur arose, and I heard distinctly the word "hare-brained" murmured in a low voice. The General turned to me smiling, and said:

"Ensign, the first votes (the youngest) in war councils, are for offensive measures. Now let us continue to collect the votes. The College Director will give us his opinion."

The little old man in black silk, a College Director, as well as a customs officer, swallowed his third cup of tea, well dashed with a strong dose of rum, and hastened to speak:

"Your Excellency," said he, "I think that we ought to act neither offensively nor defensively."

"What's that, sir?" said the General, stupefied; "military tactics present no other means; we must act either offensively or defensively."

"Your Excellency, act *subornatively*."

"Eh! eh! Your opinion is judicious," said the General; "subornative acts — that is to say, indirect acts — are also admitted by the science of tactics, and we will profit by your counsel. We might offer for the rascal's head seventy or even a hundred roubles, to be taken out of the secret funds."

"And then," interrupted the man in silk, "may I be a Kirghis ram, instead of a College Director, if the thieves do not bring their chief to you, chained hand and foot."

"We can think about it," said the General. "But let us, in any case, take some military measures. Gentlemen, give your votes in legal order."

All the opinions were contrary to mine. All agreed, that it was better to stay behind a strong stone wall, protected by cannon, than to tempt fortune in the open field. Finally, when all the opinions were known, the General shook the ashes from his pipe and pronounced the following discourse:

"Gentlemen, I am of the Ensign's opinion, for it is according to the science of military tactics, which always prefers offensive movements to defensive." He stopped and stuffed the tobacco into his pipe. I glanced exultingly at the civil service employes, who, with discontented looks, were whispering to each other.

"But, gentlemen," continued he, giving out with a sigh a long puff of smoke, "I dare not assume the responsibility. I go with the majority, which has decided that we await in this city the threatened siege, and repulse the enemy by the power of artillery, and if possible, by well-directed sorties."

The council broke up. I could not but deplore the weakness of the worthy soldier, who, contrary to his own convictions, decided to follow the opinion of ignorant inexperience.

Some days after this famous council of war, Pougatcheff, true to his word, approached Orenbourg. From the top of the city walls I made a reconnaissance of the rebel army. It seemed to me that their number had increased ten-fold. They had more artillery, taken from the small forts captured by Pougatcheff. Remembering our council, I foresaw a long captivity behind the walls of Orenbourg, and I was ready to cry with chagrin. Far from me the intention of describing the siege of Orenbourg, which belongs to history and not to family memoirs. Suffice it to say, that this siege was disastrous to the inhabitants, who had to suffer hunger and privations of every kind. Life at Orenbourg became insupportable. The decision of fate was awaited with anguish. Food was scarce; bombshells fell upon the defenseless houses of citizens. The attacks of Pougatcheff made very little excitement. I was dying of *ennui*. I had promised Accoulina that I would correspond with her, but communication was cut off, and I could not send or receive a letter from Belogorsk. My only pastime consisted in military sorties. Thanks to Pougatcheff I had an excellent horse, and I shared my meager pittance with it. I went out every day beyond the ramparts to skirmish with Pougatcheff's advance guards. The rebels had the best of it; they had plenty of food and were well mounted. Our poor cavalry were in no condition to oppose them. Sometimes our half-starved infantry went into the field; but the depth of the snow hindered them from acting successfully against the flying cavalry of the enemy. The artillery vainly thundered from the ramparts, and in the field it could not advance, because of the weakness of our attenuated horses. This was our way of making war; this is what the civil service employes of Orenbourg called prudence and foresight.

One day when we had routed and driven before us quite a large troop, I overtook a straggling Cossack; my Turkish sabre was uplifted to strike him when he doffed his cap and cried out: "Good day, Peter, how fares your health?"

I recognized our Corporal. I was delighted to see him.

"Good day, Maxim. How long since you left Belogorsk?"

"Not long, Peter. I came yesterday. I have a letter for you."

"Where is it?" I cried, delighted.

"Here," replied Maxim, putting his hand in his bosom. "I promised Polacca to try and give it to you." He gave me a folded paper, and set off on a gallop. I read with agitation the following lines:

"By the will of God I am deprived of my parents, and except you, Peter, I know of no one who can protect me; Alexis commands in place of my late father. He so terrified Father Garasim that I was obliged to go and live at our house, where I am cruelly treated by Alexis. He will force me to become his wife. He says he saved my life by not betraying the trick of passing for the niece of Accoulina. I could rather die than be his wife. I have three days to accept his offer; after that I need expect no mercy from him. O, Peter! entreat your General to send us help, and if possible, come yourself. MARIE MIRONOFF."

This letter nearly crazed me. I rushed back to the city, not sparing the spur to my poor horse. A thousand projects flashed through my mind to rescue her. Arrived in the city, I hurried to the General's and ran into his room. He was walking up and down smoking his meerschaum. Seeing me he stopped, alarmed at my abrupt entrance.

"Your Excellency, I come to you, as to my own father; do not refuse me; the happiness of my life depends upon it."

"But what is it?" said the General; "what can I do for you?"

"Your Excellency, permit me to take a battalion of soldiers and half a hundred Cossacks, to go and storm the fortress of Belogorsk."

"Storm the fortress?" said the General.

"I answer for the success of the attack, only let me go."

"No, young man," said he; "at so great a distance the enemy would easily cut off all communication with the principal strategic point."

I was frightened by his military wisdom, and hastened to interrupt him: "Captain Mironoff's daughter has written me, begging for relief. Alexis threatens to compel her to be his wife!"

"Ah! Alexis, traitor! If he fall into my hands I shall try him in twenty-four hours, and he shall be shot on the glacis of the fortress! meantime patience."

"Patience!" I cried; "in the interval Marie will be compelled to obey him."

"Oh," said the General, "that would not be a misfortune — it is better that she should become the wife of Alexis, who can protect her. When we shall have shot the traitor, then she will find a better husband."

"I would rather die," I said with fury, "than yield her to Alexis."

"I understand it all now," said the old man. "You are, no doubt, in love yourself with Marie Mironoff. That's another thing. Poor boy! Still, I can not give you a battalion and fifty Cossacks. The thing is unreasonable." I hung my head in despair. But I had a plan of my own.

XI. THE REBEL CAMP.

I left the General and hastened to my quarters. Saveliitch received me with his usual remonstrance: "What pleasure, my lord, is there in fighting these drunken brigands? If they were Turks or Swedes, all right; but these sons of dogs —"

I interrupted him: "How much money have I in all?"

"You have plenty," said he with a satisfied air. "I knew how to whisk it out of sight of the rogues." He drew from his pocket a long knitted purse full of silver coin.

"Saveliitch, give me half of what you have there, and keep the rest for yourself. I am off for the fortress of Belogorsk."

"Oh, Peter!" said the old serf, "do you not fear God? The roads are cut off. Have pity on your parents; wait a little; our troops will come and disperse the brigands, and then you can go to the four quarters of the world."

"It is too late to reflect. I must go. Do not grieve, Saveliitch; I make you a present of that money. Buy what you need. If I do not return in three days —"

"My dear," said the old man, "I will go with you, were it on foot. If you go, I must first lose my senses before I will stay crouching behind stone walls."

There was never any use disputing with the old man. In half an hour I was in the saddle, Saveliitch on an old, half-starved, limping rosinante, which a citizen, not having fodder, had given for nothing to the serf. We reached the city gates; the sentinels let us pass, and we were finally out of Orenbourg. Night was falling. My road lay before the town of Berd, the headquarters of Pougatcheff. This road was blocked up and hidden by snow; but across the steppe were traces of horses, renewed from day to day, apparently, and clearly visible. I was going at a gallop, Saveliitch could scarcely keep up and shouted, "Not so fast! My nag can not follow yours." Very soon we saw the lights of Berd. We were approaching deep ravines, which served as natural fortifications to the town. Saveliitch, without however being left behind, never ceased his lamentations. I was in hopes of passing safely the enemy's place, when I saw through the darkness five peasants armed with big sticks — Pougatcheff's extreme outpost.

"*Qui vive!* Who goes there?"

Not knowing the watchword, I was for going on without answering. But one of them seized my horse's bridle. I drew my sabre and struck the peasant on the head. His cap saved his life; he staggered and fell; the others, frightened, let me pass. The darkness, which was deepening, might have saved me from further hindrance; when, looking back, I saw that Saveliitch was not with me. What was I to do? The poor old man, with his lame horse, could not escape from the rascals. I waited a minute; then, sure that they must have seized him, I turned my horse's head to go and aid him.

Approaching the ravine I heard voices, and recognized that of Saveliitch. Hastening my steps, was soon within sight of the peasants. They had dismounted the old man, and were about to garrote him. They rushed upon me; in an instant I was on foot. Their chief said I should be conducted to the Czar. I made no resistance. We crossed the ravine to enter the town, which was illuminated. The streets were crowded and noisy. We were taken to a hut on the corner of two streets. There were some barrels of wine and a cannon near the door. One of the peasants said: "Here is the palace; we will announce you." I glanced at Saveliitch; he was making signs of the cross, and praying. We waited a long time. At last the peasant re-appeared and said: "The Czar orders the officers to his presence."

The palace, as the peasant called it, was lighted by two tallow candles. The walls were hung with gold paper. But every thing else, the benches, the table, the basin hung up by a cord, the towel on a nail in the wall, the shelf laden with earthen vessels, were exactly the same as in any other cabin. Pougatcheff, wearing his scarlet cafetan and high Cossack cap, with his hand on his hip, sat beneath the sacred pictures common to every Russian abode. Around him stood several of his chiefs. I could see that the arrival of an officer from Orenbourg had awakened some curiosity, and that they had prepared to receive me with pomp. Pougatcheff recognized me at once, and his assumed gravity disappeared.

"Ah! it is your lordship! how are you? What brings you here?"

I replied that I was traveling about my private business, when his people arrested me.

"What business?" asked he. I did not know what to answer. Pougatcheff thinking that I would not speak before witnesses gave a sign to his comrades to leave. All obeyed except two. "Speak before these," said he; "conceal nothing from them."

I glanced at these intimates of the usurper. One was an old man frail and bent, remarkable for nothing but a blue riband crossed over his coarse gray cloth cafetan; but I shall never forget his companion. He was tall, of powerful build, and seemed about forty-five. A thick red beard, piercing gray eyes, a nose without nostrils, marks of the searing irons on his forehead and cheeks, gave to his broad face, pitted by small-pox a most fierce expression. He wore a red shirt, a Kirghis robe, and wide Cossack pantaloons. Although wholly pre-occupied by my own feelings, yet this company deeply impressed me. Pougatcheff recalled me to myself quickly.

"What business brought you from Orenbourg?"

A bold idea suggested itself to my mind. It seemed to me that Providence, leading me a second time before this robber, gave me the means of accomplishing my work. I decided to seize the chance, and without reflecting on the step, I replied:

"I am on the way to the fortress of Belogorsk to liberate an oppressed orphan there."

Pougatcheff's eyes flashed. "Who dares to oppress an orphan? Were he seven feet high, he shall not escape my vengeance. Speak, who is the guilty

one?"

"Alexis; he holds in slavery that same young girl whom you saw at Father Garasim's, and wants to force her to marry him."

"I shall give Alexis a lesson! I'll teach him to oppress my subjects. I shall hang him."

"Permit me a word," said the man without nostrils. "You were too hasty giving the command to Alexis. You offended the Cossacks by giving them a noble as chief; do not offend the gentlemen by hanging one of them on the first accusation."

"There is no need to pardon nor pity," said the man with the blue riband. "It would be no harm to hang Alexis, nor to question this gentleman. Why does he visit us? If he does not acknowledge you as Czar he has no justice to get at your hands; if he acknowledge you, why did he stay at Orenbourg with your enemies? Will you not order him to prison, and have a fire lighted there?"

The old rascal's logic seemed plausible even to myself. I shuddered when I remembered into whose hands I had fallen. Pougatcheff saw my trouble.

"Eh! eh! your lordship," said he, winking, "it seems my field-marshal is right. What do you think?"

The jesting tone of the chief restored my courage. I replied calmly that I was in his power.

"Well," said Pougatcheff, "tell me now the condition of your city?"

"It is, thank God, in a good state."

"A good condition," repeated the brigand, "when the people are dying of hunger."

The usurper was right, but according to the duty imposed by my oath, I affirmed that it was a false report, and that the fort was sufficiently provisioned.

"You see he deceives you," interrupted the man with the riband. "All the deserters are unanimous in saying that famine and pestilence are at Orenbourg; that thistles are eaten as dainties there. If you wish to hang Alexis, hang on the same gibbet this young fellow, that they may be equal."

These words seemed to shake the chief. Happily the other wretch opposed this view.

"Silence," said this powerful fellow. "You think of nothing but hanging and strangling. It becomes *you* to play the hero. To look at you, no one knows where your soul is."

"And which of the saints are you?" replied the old man.

"Generals," said Pougatcheff, with dignity, "an end to your quarrels. It would be no great loss if all the mangy dogs from Orenbourg were dangling their legs under the same cross-beam; but it would be a misfortune if our own good dogs should bite each other."

Feeling the necessity of changing the conversation, I turned to Pougatcheff with a smile, and said:

"Ah! I forgot to thank you for the horse and touloup. Without your aid I should not have reached the city. I would have died from cold on the journey." My trick succeeded. Pougatcheff regained his good humor.

"The beauty of debt is the payment thereof," said he, winking. "Tell me your story. What have you to do with the young girl that Alexis persecutes? Has she caught your heart, too?"

"She is my promised bride," said I, seeing no risk in speaking the truth.

"Your promised bride! Why did you not tell me sooner? We'll marry you, and be at your wedding. Listen, Field-marshal," said he. "We are old friends, his lordship and I. Let us go to supper. Tomorrow we shall see what is to be done with him. Night brings wisdom, and the morning is better than the evening."

I would gladly have excused myself from proposed honor, but it was impossible. Two Cossacks girls covered the table with a white cloth, and brought bread, soup made of fish, and pitchers of wine and beer. Thus, for the second time, I was at table with Pougatcheff and his terrible companions. The orgie lasted far into the night. Drunkenness at last triumphed. Pougatcheff fell asleep in his place, and his companions signed to me to leave him. I went out with them. The sentry locked me up in a dark hole, where I found Saveliitch. He was so surprised by all that he saw and heard, that he asked no questions. Lying in darkness, he soon fell asleep.

The next morning Pougatcheff sent for me. Before his door stood a kibitka, with three horses abreast. The street was crowded. Pougatcheff, whom I met in the entry of his hut, was dressed for a journey, in a pelisse and Kirghis cap. His guests of the previous night surrounded him, and wore a look of submission which contrasted strongly with what I had seen on the preceding evening. Pougatcheff bade me good-morning gaily, and ordered me to sit beside him in the kibitka. We took our places.

"To the fortress of Belogorsk," said Pougatcheff to the robust Tartar, who, standing, drove his horses. My heart beat violently. The Tartar horses shot off, the bells tinkled, the kibitka flew over the snow.

"Stop! stop!" cried a voice I knew too well. "O Peter! do not abandon me in my old age, in the midst of the rob —"

"Ah, you old owl!" said Pougatcheff, "sit up there in front."

"Thanks, Czar, may God give you a long life."

The horses set off again. The people in the streets stopped and bowed low, as the usurper passed. Pougatcheff saluted right and left. In an instant we were out of the town, taking our way over a well-defined road. I was silent. Pougatcheff broke in upon my reverie. "Why so silent, my lord?" said he.

"I can not help thinking," said I, "of the chain of events. I am an officer, noble, yesterday at war with you; today I ride in the same carriage with you, and all the happiness of my life depends on you."

"Are you afraid?"

"You have already given me my life!"

“You say truly. You know how my fellows looked upon you; only today they wanted to try you as a spy. The old one wanted to torture and then hang you; but I would not, because I remembered your glass of wine and your touloup. I am not bloodthirsty, as your friends say.” I remembered the taking of our fortress, but I did not contradict him.

“What do they say of me at Orenbourg?”

“It is said there, that you will not be easily vanquished. It must be confessed that you have given us some work.”

“Yes; I am a great warrior. Do you think the King Prussia is as strong as I?”

“What do you think yourself? Can you beat Frederick?”

“Frederick the Great? Why not? Wait till I march to Moscow!”

“You really intend to march on Moscow?”

“God knows,” said he, reflecting; “my road is narrow — my boys do not obey — they are thieves — I must listen — keep my ears open; at the first reverse they would save their own necks by my head.”

“Would it not be better,” I said, “to abandon them now, before it is too late, and have recourse to the clemency of the Empress?”

He smiled bitterly. “No; the time is passed. I shall end as I began. Who knows?”

Our Tartar was humming a plaintive air; Saveliitch, sound asleep, swayed from side to side; our kibitka was gliding rapidly over the winter road. I saw in the distance a village well known to my eyes, with its palisade and church spire on the steep bank of the river Iaik. A quarter of an hour after we entered the fortress of Belogorsk.

XII. MARIE.

The kibitka stopped before the Commandant's house. The inhabitants had recognized the usurper's bells and equipage, and had come out in crowds to meet him. Alexis, dressed like a Cossack, and bearded like one, helped the brigand to descend from his kibitka. The sight of me troubled him, but soon recovering himself, he said: "You are one of us?" I turned my head away without replying. My heart was wrung when we entered the room that I know so well, where still upon the wall hung, like an epitaph, the diploma of the deceased Commandant. Pougatcheff seated himself upon the same sofa where many a time Ivan Mironoff had dozed to the hum of his wife's voice. Alexis' own hand presented the brandy to his chief. Pougatcheff drank a glass and said, pointing to me: "Offer a glass to his lordship." Alexis approached me, and again I turned my back upon him. Pougatcheff asked him a few questions about the condition of the fortress, and then, in an unpremeditated manner, said: "Tell me, who is this young girl that you have under guard?"

Alexis became pale as death. "Czar," said he, a tremor in his voice, "she is in her own room; she is not locked up."

"Take me to her room," said the usurper, rising.

Hesitation was impossible. Alexis led the way to Marie's room. I followed. On the stairs Alexis stopped: "Czar, demand of me what you will, but do not permit a stranger to enter my wife's room."

"You are married?" I shouted, ready to tear him to pieces.

"Silence!" interrupted the brigand, "this is my business. And you," said he, turning to Alexis, "do not be too officious. Whether she be your wife or not, I shall take whom I please into her room. Your lordship, follow me."

At the door of the room Alexis stopped again: "Czar, she has had a fever these three days; she is delirious."

"Open," said Pougatcheff.

Alexis fumbled in his pockets, and at last said that he had forgotten the key. Pougatcheff kicked the door; the lock yielded, the door opened and we entered.

I glanced into the room, and nearly fainted. On the floor, in the coarse dress of a peasant, Marie was seated, pale, thin, her hair in disorder; before her on the floor stood a pitcher of water covered by a piece of bread. Upon seeing me, she started, and uttered a piercing shriek. Pougatcheff glanced at Alexis, smiled bitterly, and said: "Your hospital is in nice order?"

"Tell me, my little dove, why does your husband punish you in this way?"

"My husband! he is not my husband. I am resolved to die rather than marry him; and I shall die, if not soon released."

Pougatcheff gave a furious look at Alexis, and said: "Do you dare to deceive me, knave?"

Alexis fell on his knees. Contempt stifled all my feelings of hatred and vengeance. I saw with disgust, a gentleman kneeling at the feet of a Cossack deserter.

"I pardon you, this time," said the brigand, "but remember, your next fault will recall this one." He turned to Marie, and said, gently: "Come out, my pretty girl, you are free. I am the Czar!"

Marie looked at him, hid her face in her hands and fell on the floor unconscious. She had no doubt divined that he had caused her parents' death. I rushed to aid her, when my old acquaintance, Polacca, boldly entered, and hastened to revive her mistress. Pougatcheff, Alexis and I went down to the reception room.

"Now, your lordship, we have released the pretty girl, what say you? Shall we not send for Father Garasim, and have him perform the marriage ceremony for his niece? If you like, I will be your father by proxy, Alexis your groomsman; then we'll shut the gates and make merry!"

As I anticipated, Alexis, hearing this speech, lost his self-control.

"Czar," said he, in a fury, "I am guilty; I have lied to you, but Grineff also deceives you. This young girl is not Father Garasim's niece. She is Ivan Mironoff's daughter."

Pougatcheff glared at me. "What does that mean?" said he to me.

"Alexis says truly," I replied, firmly.

"You did not tell me that," said the usurper, whose face darkened.

"Judge of it yourself. Could I declare before your people that Marie was Captain Mironoff's daughter? They would have torn her to pieces. No one could have saved her."

"You are right," said Pougatcheff, "my drunkards would not have spared the child. Accoulina did well to deceive them."

"Listen," I said, seeing his good humor, "I do not know your real name, and I do not want to know it. But before God, I am ready to pay you with my life, for what you have done for me. Only, ask me nothing contrary to honor, and my conscience as a Christian. You are my benefactor. Let me go with this orphan, and we, whatever happens to you, wherever you may be, we shall pray God to save your soul."

"Be it as you desire," said he, "punish to the end, or pardon completely, that's my way. Take your promised bride wherever you choose, and may God give you love and happiness." He turned to Alexis, and ordered him to write me a passport for all the forts subject to his power. Alexis was petrified with astonishment. Pougatcheff went off to inspect the fortress; Alexis followed him; I remained.

I ran up to Marie's room. The door was closed. I knocked.

"Who is there?" asked Polacca.

I gave my name. I heard Marie say: "In an instant, Peter, I shall join you at Accoulina's."

Father Garasim and Accoulina came out to welcome me. I was honored with everything at the command of the hostess, whose voluble tongue never ceased. It was not long before Marie entered, quite pale; she had laid aside

the peasant's dress, and was, as usual, clad in simplicity, but with neatness and taste. I seized her hand, unable to utter a word. We were both silent from full hearts. Our hosts left us, and I could now speak of plans for her safety. It was impossible that she should stay in a fortress subject to Pougatcheff, and commanded by the infamous Alexis. Neither could she find refuge at Orenbourg, suffering all the horrors of siege. I proposed that she should go to my father's country-seat. This surprised her. But I assured her that my father would hold it a duty and an honor to receive the daughter of a veteran who had died for his country. In conclusion, I said: "My dear Marie; I consider thee as my wife; these strange events have bound us for ever to each other."

Marie listened with dignity; she felt as I did, but repeated that without my parents' consent she would never be my wife. I could not reply to this objection. I folded her to my heart, and my project became our mutual resolve.

An hour after, the Corporal brought me my passport, having the scratch which served as Pougatcheff's sign-manual, and told me that the Czar awaited me. I found him ready for his journey. To this man — why not tell the truth? — cruel and terrible to all but me, I was drawn by strong sympathy. I wanted to snatch him from the horde of robbers, whose chief he was; but the presence of Alexis and the crowd around him prevented any expression of these feelings. Our parting was that of friends. As the horses were moving, he leaned out of the kibitka and said to me: "Adieu, again, your lordship; perhaps we may meet once more."

We did meet again, but under what circumstances!

I returned to Father Garasim's, where our preparations were soon completed. Our baggage was put into the Commandant's old equipage. The horses were harnessed. Marie went, before setting off, to visit once more the tomb in the church-yard, and soon returned, having wept in silence over all that remained to her of her parents. Father Garasim and Accoulina stood on the steps. Marie, Polacca, and I sat in the interior of the kibitka. Saveliitch perched himself up in front.

"Adieu, Marie, sweet little dove! Adieu, Peter, our handsome falcon!" exclaimed the kind Accoulina.

Passing the Commandant's house, I saw Alexis, whose face expressed determined hate.

XIII. THE ARREST.

In two hours we reached the neighboring fortress, which also belonged to Pougatcheff. We there changed horses. By the celerity with which they served us, and the eager zeal of the bearded Cossack, whom Pougatcheff had made Commandant, I perceived that, thanks to the talk of our postilion, I was supposed to be a favorite with their master. When we started off again, it was dusk; we were drawing near a town where, according to the bearded Commandant, there ought to be a very strong detachment of Pougatcheff's forces. The sentinels stopped us and to the demand: "Who goes there?" our postilion answered in a loud voice: "A friend of the Czar, traveling with his wife."

We were at once surrounded by a detachment of Russian hussars, who swore frightfully.

"Come out," said a Russian officer, heavily mustached; "We'll give you a bath!"

I requested to be taken before the authorities. Perceiving that I was an officer, the soldiers ceased swearing, and the officer took me to the Major's. Saveliitch followed, growling out: "We fall from the fire into the flame!"

The kibitka came slowly after us. In five minutes we reached a small house, all lighted up. The officer left me under a strong guard, and entered to announce my capture. He returned almost instantly, saying that I was ordered to prison, and her ladyship to the presence of the Major.

"Is he mad?" I cried.

"I can not tell, your lordship."

I jumped up the steps — the sentinels had not time to stop me — and burst into the room where six hussar officers were playing faro. The Major kept the bank. I instantly recognized the Major as Ivan Zourine, who had so thoroughly emptied my purse at Simbirsk. "Is it possible? is this you Ivan Zourine?"

"Halloo! Peter; what luck? where are you from? will you take a chance?"

"Thanks; I would rather have some apartments assigned me."

"No need of apartments, stay with me."

"I can not; I am not alone."

"Bring your comrade with you."

"I am not with a comrade; I am with — a lady."

"A lady! where did you fish her out?" and he whistled in so rollicking a manner, that the rest burst out laughing.

"Well," said Zourine, "then you must have a house in the town. Here, boy! why do you not bring in Pougatcheff's friend?"

"What are you about," said I. "It is Captain Mironoff's daughter. I have just obtained her liberty, and I am taking her to my father's, where I shall leave her."

"In the name of Heaven, what are *you* talking about? Are *you* Pougatcheff's chum?"

"I will tell you everything later; first go and see this poor girl, whom your soldiers have horribly frightened."

Zourine went out into the street to excuse himself to Marie, and explain the mistake, and ordered the officer to place her and her maid in the best house in the city. I stayed with him. After supper, as soon as we were alone, I gave him the story of my adventures.

He shook his head. "That's all very well; but why will you marry? As an officer and a comrade, I tell you marriage is folly! Now listen to me. The road to Simbirsk has been swept clean by our soldiers; you can therefore send the Captain's daughter to your parents tomorrow, and remain yourself in my detachment. No need to return to Orenbourg; you might fall again into the hands of the rebels."

I resolved to follow, in part, Zourine's advice. Saveliitch came to prepare my room for the night. I told him to be ready to set out in the morning with Marie.

"Who will attend you, my lord?"

"My old friend," said I, trying to soften him, "I do not need a servant here, and in serving Marie, you serve me, for I shall marry her as soon as the war is over."

"Marry!" repeated he, with his hands crossed, and a look of inexpressible blankness, "the child wants to marry! What will your parents say?"

"They will, no doubt, consent as soon as they know Marie. You will intercede for us, will you not?"

I had touched the old man's heart. "O Peter!" said he, "you are too young to marry, but the young lady is an angel, and it would be a sin to let the chance slip. I will do as you desire."

The next day I made known my plans to Marie. As Zourine's detachment was to leave the city that same day, delay was impossible. I confided Marie to my dear old Saveliitch, and gave him a letter for my father. Marie, in tears, took leave of me. I did not dare to speak, lest the bystanders should observe my feelings.

It was the end of the February; Winter, which had rendered manoeuvring difficult was now at a close, and our generals were preparing for a combined campaign. At the approach of our troops, revolted villages returned to their duty, while Prince Galitzin defeated the usurper, and raised the siege of Orenbourg, which was the death-blow to the rebellion. We heard of Pougatcheff in the Ural regions, and on the way to Moscow. But he was captured. The war was over. Zourine received orders to return his troops to their posts. I jumped about the room like a boy. Zourine shrugged his shoulders, and said: "Wait till you are married, and see how foolish you are!"

I had leave of absence. In a few days I would be at home and united to Marie. One day Zourine came into my room with a paper in his hand, and

sent away the servant.

“What’s the matter?” said I.

“A slight annoyance,” he answered, handing me the paper. “Read.”

It was confidential order addressed to all the chiefs of detachments to arrest me, and send me under guard to Khasan before the Commission of Inquiry, created to give information against Pougatcheff and his accomplices. The paper fell from my hands.

“Do not be cast down,” said Zourine, “but set out at once.”

My conscience was easy, but the delay! It would be months, perhaps, before I could get through the Commission. Zourine bade me an affectionate adieu. I mounted the telega (Summer carriage), two hussars withdrawn swords beside, and took the road to Khasan.

XIV. THE SENTENCE.

I had no doubt that I was arrested for having left the fortress of Orenbourg without leave, and felt sure that I could exculpate myself. Not only were we not forbidden, but on the contrary, we were encouraged to make forays against the enemy. My friendly relations with Pougatcheff, however, wore a suspicious look.

Arriving at Khasan, I found the city almost reduced to ashes. Along the streets there were heaps of calcined material of unroofed walls of houses — a proof that Pougatcheff had been there. The fortress was intact. I was taken there and delivered to the officer on duty. He ordered the blacksmith to rivet securely iron shackles on my feet. I was then consigned to a small, dark dungeon, lighted only by a loop-hole, barred with iron. This did not presage anything good, yet I did not lose courage; for, having tasted the delight of prayer, offered by a heart full of anguish, I fell asleep, without a thought for the morrow. The next morning I was taken before the Commission. Two soldiers crossed the yard with me, to the Commandant's dwelling. Stopping in the ante-chamber, they let me proceed alone to the interior.

I entered quite a spacious room. At a table, covered with papers, sat two personages, — a General advanced in years, of stern aspect, and a young officer of the Guards, of easy and agreeable manners. Near the window, at another table, a secretary, pen on ear, bending over a paper, was ready to take my deposition.

The interrogation began: "Your name and profession?" The General asked if I was the son of Andrew Grineff, and upon my replying in the affirmative, exclaimed: "It is a pity so honorable a man should have a son so unworthy of him!"

I replied that I hoped to refute all charges against me, by a sincere avowal of the truth. My assurance displeased him.

"You are a bold fellow," said he, frowning; "but we have seen others like you."

The young officer asked how, and for what purpose I had entered the rebel service.

I replied indignantly, that being an officer and a noble, I was incapable of enlisting in the usurper's army, and had never served him in any way.

"How is it," said my judge, "that the 'officer and noble' is the only one spared by Pougatcheff? How is it that the 'officer and noble' received presents from the chief rebel, of a horse and a pelisse? Upon what is this intimacy founded, if not on treason, or at least unpardonable cowardice?"

The words wounded me, and I undertook with warmth my own defense, finally invoking the name of my General who could testify to my zeal during the siege of Orenbourg. The severe old man took from the table an open letter, and read:

“With regard to Ensign Griness, I have the honor to declare, that he was in the service at Orenbourg from the month of October, 1773, till the following February. Since then, he has not presented himself.”

Here the General said harshly: “What can you say now to justify your conduct?”

My judges had listened with interest and even kindness, to the recital of my acquaintance with the usurper, from the meeting in the snowdrift to the taking of Belogorsk, where he gave me my life through gratitude. I was going to continue my defense, by relating frankly my relations with Marie, and her rescue. But if I spoke of her the Commission would force her to appear, and her name would become the theme of no very delicate remarks by the interrogated witnesses. These thoughts so troubled me that I stammered, and at last was silent.

The judges were prejudiced against me by my evident confusion. The young Guardsman asked that I should be confronted by my chief accuser. Some minutes later the clank of iron fetters resounded, and Alexis entered.

He was pale and thin. His hair, formerly black as a raven’s wing, was turning gray. He repeated his accusation in a weak but decided tone.

According to him, I was Pougatcheff’s spy. I heard him to the end in silence, and rejoiced at one thing: he never pronounced the name of Marie Mironoff. Was it that his self-love smarted from her contemptuous rejection of him? or was there in his heart a spark of that same feeling which made me also silent on that point? This confirmed me in my resolution, and when asked what I had to answer to the charges of Alexis, I merely said that I held to my first declaration, and had nothing more to add.

The General remanded us to prison. I looked at Alexis. He smiled with satisfied hate, raised up his shackles to hasten his pace and pass before me. I had no further examination. I was not an eye-witness of what remains to be told the reader; but I have so often heard the story, that the minutest particulars are engraved on my memory.

Marie was received by my parents with the cordial courtesy which distinguished the preceding generation. They became very much attached to her, and my father no longer considered my love a folly. The news of my arrest was a fearful blow; but Marie and Saveliitch had so frankly told the origin of my connection with Pougatcheff, that the news did not seem grave. My father could not be persuaded that I would take part in an infamous revolt, whose object was the subversion of the throne and the extinction of the nobility. So better news was expected, and several weeks passed, when at last a letter came from our relative Prince B — -. After the usual compliments, he told my father that the suspicions of my complicity in the rebel plots were only too well founded, as had been proved, — that an exemplary execution might have been my fate, were it not that the Empress, out of consideration for the father’s white hair and loyal services, had commuted the sentence of the criminal son. She had exiled him for life

to the depths of Siberia!

The blow nearly killed my father, his firmness gave way, and his usually silent sorrow burst into bitter complaints: "What! my son plotting with Pougatcheff! The Empress gives him his life! Execution not the worst thing in the world! My grandfather died on the scaffold in defense of his convictions! But, that a noble should betray his oath, unite with bandits, knaves and revolted slaves! shame! shame forever on our face!"

Frightened by his despair, my mother did not dare to show her grief, and Marie was more desolate than they. Persuaded that I could justify myself if I chose, she divined the motive of my silence, and believed that she was the cause of my suffering.

One evening, seated on his sofa, my father was turning over the leaves of the "*Court Almanac*," but his thoughts were far away, and the book did not produce its usual effect upon him. My mother was knitting in silence, and from time to time a furtive tear dropped upon her work. Marie, who was sewing in the same room, without any prelude declared to my parents that she was obliged to go to Saint Petersburg, and begged them to furnish her the means.

My mother said: "Why will you leave us?"

Marie replied that her fate depended on this journey; that she was going to claim the protection of those in favor at Court, as the daughter of a man who had perished a victim to his loyalty.

My father bowed his head. A word which recalled the supposed crime of his son, seemed a sharp reproach.

"Go," said he, at last, with a sigh; "we will not place an obstacle to your happiness. May God give you an honorable husband and not a traitor!"

He rose and left the room. Alone with my mother, Marie confided to her, in part, the object of her journey. My mother, in tears, kissed her and prayed for the success of the project. A few days after, Marie, Polacca and Saveliitch left home.

When Marie reached Sofia, she learned that the Court was at that moment in residence at the summer palace of Tzarskoie-Selo. She decided to stop there, and obtained a small room at the post-house. The post mistress came to chat with the new-comer. She told Marie, pompously, that she was the niece of an official attached to the Court — her uncle having the honor of attending to the fires in her Majesty's abode! Marie soon knew at what hour the Empress rose, took her coffee, and went on the promenade; in brief, the conversation of Anna was like a page from the memoirs of the times, and would be very precious in our days. The two women went together to the Imperial gardens, where Anna told Marie the romance of each pathway and the history of every bridge over the artificial streams. Next day very early Marie returned alone to the Imperial gardens. The weather was superb. The sun gilded the linden tops, already seared by the Autumn frosts. The broad lake sparkled, the swans, just aroused, came out gravely from the shore. Marie was going to a charming green sward, when a little dog, of English blood, came running to her barking. She was

startled; but a voice of rare refinement said: "He will not bite you; do not be afraid."

A lady about fifty years of age was seated on a rustic bench. She was dressed in a white morning-dress, a light cap and a mantilla. Her face, full and florid, was expressive of calmness and seriousness. She was the first to speak: "You are evidently a stranger here?"

"That is true, madam. I arrived from the country yesterday."

"You are with your parents?"

"No, madam, alone."

"You are too young to travel alone. Are you here on business?"

"My parents are dead. I came to present a petition to the Empress."

"You are an orphan; you have to complain of injustice, or injury?"

"Madam, I came to ask for a pardon, not justice."

"Permit me a question: Who are you?"

"I am the daughter of Captain Mironoff."

"Of Captain Mironoff? of him who commanded one of the fortresses in the province of Orenbourg?"

"The same, madam."

The lady seemed touched. "Pardon me, I am going to Court. Explain the object of your petition; perhaps I can aid you." Marie took from her pocket a paper which she handed to the lady, who read it attentively. Marie, whose eyes followed every movement of her countenance, was alarmed by the severe expression of face so calm and gracious a moment before.

"You intercede for Grineff?" said the lady, in an icy tone. "The Empress can not pardon him. He went over to the usurper, not as an ignorant believer, but as a depraved and dangerous good-for-nothing."

"It is not true!" exclaimed Marie.

"What! not true?" said the lady, flushing to the eyes.

"Before God, it is not true. I know all. I will tell you all. It was for me only that exposed himself to all these misfortunes. If he did not clear himself before his judges, it was because he would not drag me before the authorities." Marie then related with warmth all that the reader knows.

"Where do you lodge?" asked the lady, when the young girl had finished her recital. Upon hearing that she was staying with the postmaster's wife, she nodded, and said with a smile: "Ah! I know her. Adieu! tell no one of our meeting. I hope you will not have long to wait for the answer to your petition."

She rose and went away by a covered path. Marie went back to Anna's, full of fair hope. The postmaster's wife was surprised that Marie took so early a promenade, which might in Autumn, prove injurious to a young girl's health. She brought the *Somovar*, and with her cup of tea was going to relate one of her interminable stories, when a carriage with the imperial escutcheon stopped before the door. A lackey, wearing the imperial livery, entered and announced that her Majesty deigned to order to her presence the daughter of Captain Mironoff!

“Ah!” exclaimed Anna, “the Empress orders you to Court! How did she know you were with me? You can not present yourself — you do not know how to walk in courtly fashion! I ought to go with you. Shall I not send to the doctor’s wife and get her yellow dress with flounces, for you?”

The lackey declared that he had orders to take Marie alone, just as she was. Anna did not dare to disobey, and Marie set out. She had a presentiment that her destiny was now to be decided. Her heart beat violently. In a few minutes the carriage was at the palace, and Marie, having crossed a long suite of apartments, vacant and sumptuous, entered the *boudoir* of the Empress. The nobles who surrounded their sovereign respectfully made way for the young girl.

The Empress, in whom Marie recognized the lady of the garden, said, graciously: “I am pleased to be able to grant your prayer. Convinced of the innocence of your betrothed, I have arranged everything. Here is a letter for your future father-in-law.”

Marie, in tears, fell at the feet of the Empress, who raised her up and kissed her, saying:

“I know that you are not rich; but I have to acquit myself of a debt to the daughter of a brave man, Captain Mironoff.” Treating Marie with tenderness, the Empress dismissed her. That day Marie set out for my father’s country-seat, not having even glanced at Saint Petersburg.

Here terminate the memoirs of Peter Grineff. We know by family tradition that he was set free about the end of the year 1774. We know too, that he was present at the execution of Pougatcheff, who, recognizing him in the crowd, gave him one last sign with the head which, a moment after, was shown to the people, bleeding and inanimate.

Peter Grineff became the husband of Marie Mironoff. Their descendents still live, in the Province of Simbirsk, and in the hereditary manor is still shown the autograph letter of the Empress Catherine II. It is addressed to Andrew Grineff, and contains, with his son’s justification, a touching and beautiful eulogium of Marie, the Captain’s daughter.

THE SHOT



Translated by T. Keane

This short story and the next four tales were originally published in 1831 in a collection titled *The Tales of the Late Ivan Petrovich Belkin*. The tales are not related to each another, except that they are all stories that are told to the landowner Ivan Petrovich Belkin. Forming two chapters, *The Shot* is narrated by colonel I.L.P., who in the early days of his military career was stationed at a country outpost. He recounts how the soldiers always visited a peculiar man named Silvio to play cards and the plot concerns this interesting character.



Pushkin in 1831, at the time of publication

CHAPTER I.

We were stationed in the little town of N — . The life of an officer in the army is well known. In the morning, drill and the riding-school; dinner with the Colonel or at a Jewish restaurant; in the evening, punch and cards. In N — - there was not one open house, not a single marriageable girl. We used to meet in each other's rooms, where, except our uniforms, we never saw anything.

One civilian only was admitted into our society. He was about thirty-five years of age, and therefore we looked upon him as an old fellow. His experience gave him great advantage over us, and his habitual taciturnity, stern disposition, and caustic tongue produced a deep impression upon our young minds. Some mystery surrounded his existence; he had the appearance of a Russian, although his name was a foreign one. He had formerly served in the Hussars, and with distinction. Nobody knew the cause that had induced him to retire from the service and settle in a wretched little village, where he lived poorly and, at the same time, extravagantly. He always went on foot, and constantly wore a shabby black overcoat, but the officers of our regiment were ever welcome at his table. His dinners, it is true, never consisted of more than two or three dishes, prepared by a retired soldier, but the champagne flowed like water. Nobody knew what his circumstances were, or what his income was, and nobody dared to question him about them. He had a collection of books, consisting chiefly of works on military matters and a few novels. He willingly lent them to us to read, and never asked for them back; on the other hand, he never returned to the owner the books that were lent to him. His principal amusement was shooting with a pistol. The walls of his room were riddled with bullets, and were as full of holes as a honeycomb. A rich collection of pistols was the only luxury in the humble cottage where he lived. The skill which he had acquired with his favorite weapon was simply incredible: and if he had offered to shoot a pear off somebody's forage-cap, not a man in our regiment would have hesitated to place the object upon his head.

Our conversation often turned upon duels. Silvio — so I will call him — never joined in it. When asked if he had ever fought, he dryly replied that he had; but he entered into no particulars, and it was evident that such questions were not to his liking. We came to the conclusion that he had upon his conscience the memory of some unhappy victim of his terrible skill. Moreover, it never entered into the head of any of us to suspect him of anything like cowardice. There are persons whose mere look is sufficient to repel such a suspicion. But an unexpected incident occurred which astounded us all.

One day, about ten of our officers dined with Silvio. They drank as usual, that is to say, a great deal. After dinner we asked our host to hold the bank for a game at faro. For a long time he refused, for he hardly ever played, but at last he ordered cards to be brought, placed half a hundred

ducats upon the table, and sat down to deal. We took our places round him, and the play began. It was Silvio's custom to preserve a complete silence when playing. He never disputed, and never entered into explanations. If the punter made a mistake in calculating, he immediately paid him the difference or noted down the surplus. We were acquainted with this habit of his, and we always allowed him to have his own way; but among us on this occasion was an officer who had only recently been transferred to our regiment. During the course of the game, this officer absently scored one point too many. Silvio took the chalk and noted down the correct account according to his usual custom. The officer, thinking that he had made a mistake, began to enter into explanations. Silvio continued dealing in silence. The officer, losing patience, took the brush and rubbed out what he considered was wrong. Silvio took the chalk and corrected the score again. The officer, heated with wine, play, and the laughter of his comrades, considered himself grossly insulted, and in his rage he seized a brass candlestick from the table, and hurled it at Silvio, who barely succeeded in avoiding the missile. We were filled with consternation. Silvio rose, white with rage, and with gleaming eyes, said:

"My dear sir, have the goodness to withdraw, and thank God that this has happened in my house."

None of us entertained the slightest doubt as to what the result would be, and we already looked upon our new comrade as a dead man. The officer withdrew, saying that he was ready to answer for his offence in whatever way the banker liked. The play went on for a few minutes longer, but feeling that our host was no longer interested in the game, we withdrew one after the other, and repaired to our respective quarters, after having exchanged a few words upon the probability of there soon being a vacancy in the regiment.

The next day, at the riding-school, we were already asking each other if the poor lieutenant was still alive, when he himself appeared among us. We put the same question to him, and he replied that he had not yet heard from Silvio. This astonished us. We went to Silvio's house and found him in the courtyard shooting bullet after bullet into an ace pasted upon the gate. He received us as usual, but did not utter a word about the event of the previous evening. Three days passed, and the lieutenant was still alive. We asked each other in astonishment: "Can it be possible that Silvio is not going to fight?"

Silvio did not fight. He was satisfied with a very lame explanation, and became reconciled to his assailant.

This lowered him very much in the opinion of all our young fellows. Want of courage is the last thing to be pardoned by young men, who usually look upon bravery as the chief of all human virtues, and the excuse for every possible fault. But, by degrees, everything became forgotten, and Silvio regained his former influence.

I alone could not approach him on the old footing. Being endowed by nature with a romantic imagination, I had become attached more than all

the others to the man whose life was an enigma, and who seemed to me the hero of some mysterious drama. He was fond of me; at least, with me alone did he drop his customary sarcastic tone, and converse on different subjects in a simple and unusually agreeable manner. But after this unlucky evening, the thought that his honor had been tarnished, and that the stain had been allowed to remain upon it in accordance with his own wish, was ever present in my mind, and prevented me treating him as before. I was ashamed to look at him. Silvio was too intelligent and experienced not to observe this and guess the cause of it. This seemed to vex him; at least I observed once or twice a desire on his part to enter into an explanation with me, but I avoided such opportunities, and Silvio gave up the attempt. From that time forward I saw him only in the presence of my comrades, and our confidential conversations came to an end.

The inhabitants of the capital, with minds occupied by so many matters of business and pleasure, have no idea of the many sensations so familiar to the inhabitants of villages and small towns, as, for instance, the awaiting the arrival of the post. On Tuesdays and Fridays our regimental bureau used to be filled with officers: some expecting money, some letters, and others newspapers. The packets were usually opened on the spot, items of news were communicated from one to another, and the bureau used to present a very animated picture. Silvio used to have his letters addressed to our regiment, and he was generally there to receive them.

One day he received a letter, the seal of which he broke with a look of great impatience. As he read the contents, his eyes sparkled. The officers, each occupied with his own letters, did not observe anything.

"Gentlemen," said Silvio, "circumstances demand my immediate departure;

I leave to-night. I hope that you will not refuse to dine with me for the last time. I shall expect you, too," he added, turning towards me.

"I shall expect you without fail."

With these words he hastily departed, and we, after agreeing to meet at Silvio's, dispersed to our various quarters.

I arrived at Silvio's house at the appointed time, and found nearly the whole regiment there. All his things were already packed; nothing remained but the bare, bullet-riddled walls. We sat down to table. Our host was in an excellent humor, and his gayety was quickly communicated to the rest. Corks popped every moment, glasses foamed incessantly, and, with the utmost warmth, we wished our departing friend a pleasant journey and every happiness. When we rose from the table it was already late in the evening. After having wished everybody good-bye, Silvio took me by the hand and detained me just at the moment when I was preparing to depart.

"I want to speak to you," he said in a low voice.

I stopped behind.

The guests had departed, and we two were left alone. Sitting down opposite each other, we silently lit our pipes. Silvio seemed greatly troubled; not a trace remained of his former convulsive gayety. The intense

pallor of his face, his sparkling eyes, and the thick smoke issuing from his mouth, gave him a truly diabolical appearance. Several minutes elapsed, and then Silvio broke the silence.

"Perhaps we shall never see each other again," said he; "before we part, I should like to have an explanation with you. You may have observed that I care very little for the opinion of other people, but I like you, and I feel that it would be painful to me to leave you with a wrong impression upon your mind."

He paused, and began to knock the ashes out of his pipe. I sat gazing silently at the ground.

"You thought it strange," he continued, "that I did not demand satisfaction from that drunken idiot R — -. You will admit, however, that having the choice of weapons, his life was in my hands, while my own was in no great danger. I could ascribe my forbearance to generosity alone, but I will not tell a lie. If I could have chastised R — - without the least risk to my own life, I should never have pardoned him."

I looked at Silvio with astonishment. Such a confession completely astounded me. Silvio continued:

"Exactly so: I have no right to expose myself to death. Six years ago I received a slap in the face, and my enemy still lives."

My curiosity was greatly excited.

"Did you not fight with him?" I asked. "Circumstances probably separated you."

"I did fight with him," replied Silvio; "and here is a souvenir of our duel."

Silvio rose and took from a cardboard box a red cap with a gold tassel and embroidery (what the French call a *bonnet de police*); he put it on — a bullet had passed through it about an inch above the forehead.

"You know," continued Silvio, "that I served in one of the Hussar regiments. My character is well known to you: I am accustomed to taking the lead. From my youth this has been my passion. In our time dissoluteness was the fashion, and I was the most outrageous man in the army. We used to boast of our drunkenness; I beat in a drinking bout the famous Bourtsoff [Footnote: A cavalry officer, notorious for his drunken escapades], of whom Denis Davidoff [Footnote: A military poet who flourished in the reign of Alexander I] has sung. Duels in our regiment were constantly taking place, and in all of them I was either second or principal. My comrades adored me, while the regimental commanders, who were constantly being changed, looked upon me as a necessary evil.

"I was calmly enjoying my reputation, when a young man belonging to a wealthy and distinguished family — I will not mention his name — joined our regiment. Never in my life have I met with such a fortunate fellow! Imagine to yourself youth, wit, beauty, unbounded gayety, the most reckless bravery, a famous name, untold wealth — imagine all these, and you can form some idea of the effect that he would be sure to produce among us. My supremacy was shaken. Dazzled by my reputation, he began to seek my

friendship, but I received him coldly, and without the least regret he held aloof from me. I took a hatred to him. His success in the regiment and in the society of ladies brought me to the verge of despair. I began to seek a quarrel with him; to my epigrams he replied with epigrams which always seemed to me more spontaneous and more cutting than mine, and which were decidedly more amusing, for he joked while I fumed. At last, at a ball given by a Polish landed proprietor, seeing him the object of the attention of all the ladies, and especially of the mistress of the house, with whom I was upon very good terms, I whispered some grossly insulting remark in his ear. He flamed up and gave me a slap in the face. We grasped our swords; the ladies fainted; we were separated; and that same night we set out to fight.

“The dawn was just breaking. I was standing at the appointed place with my three seconds. With inexplicable impatience I awaited my opponent. The spring sun rose, and it was already growing hot. I saw him coming in the distance. He was walking on foot, accompanied by one second. We advanced to meet him. He approached, holding his cap filled with black cherries. The seconds measured twelve paces for us. I had to fire first, but my agitation was so great, that I could not depend upon the steadiness of my hand; and in order to give myself time to become calm, I ceded to him the first shot. My adversary would not agree to this. It was decided that we should cast lots. The first number fell to him, the constant favorite of fortune. He took aim, and his bullet went through my cap. It was now my turn. His life at last was in my hands; I looked at him eagerly, endeavoring to detect if only the faintest shadow of uneasiness. But he stood in front of my pistol, picking out the ripest cherries from his cap and spitting out the stones, which flew almost as far as my feet. His indifference annoyed me beyond measure. ‘What is the use,’ thought I, ‘of depriving him of life, when he attaches no value whatever to it?’ A malicious thought flashed through my mind. I lowered my pistol.

“‘You don’t seem to be ready for death just at present,’ I said to him: ‘you wish to have your breakfast; I do not wish to hinder you.’

“‘You are not hindering me in the least,’ replied he. ‘Have the goodness to fire, or just as you please — the shot remains yours; I shall always be ready at your service.’

“I turned to the seconds, informing them that I had no intention of firing that day, and with that the duel came to an end.

“I resigned my commission and retired to this little place. Since then not a day has passed that I have not thought of revenge. And now my hour has arrived.”

Silvio took from his pocket the letter that he had received that morning, and gave it to me to read. Some one (it seemed to be his business agent) wrote to him from Moscow, that a CERTAIN PERSON was going to be married to a young and beautiful girl.

“You can guess,” said Silvio, “who the certain person is. I am going to Moscow. We shall see if he will look death in the face with as much indifference now, when he is on the eve of being married, as he did once

with his cherries!”

With these words, Silvio rose, threw his cap upon the floor, and began pacing up and down the room like a tiger in his cage. I had listened to him in silence; strange conflicting feelings agitated me.

The servant entered and announced that the horses were ready. Silvio grasped my hand tightly, and we embraced each other. He seated himself in his telega, in which lay two trunks, one containing his pistols, the other his effects. We said good-bye once more, and the horses galloped off.

CHAPTER II.

Several years passed, and family circumstances compelled me to settle in the poor little village of M — -. Occupied with agricultural pursuits, I ceased not to sigh in secret for my former noisy and careless life. The most difficult thing of all was having to accustom myself to passing the spring and winter evenings in perfect solitude. Until the hour for dinner I managed to pass away the time somehow or other, talking with the bailiff, riding about to inspect the work, or going round to look at the new buildings; but as soon as it began to get dark, I positively did not know what to do with myself. The few books that I had found in the cupboards and storerooms I already knew by heart. All the stories that my housekeeper Kirilovna could remember I had heard over and over again. The songs of the peasant women made me feel depressed. I tried drinking spirits, but it made my head ache; and moreover, I confess I was afraid of becoming a drunkard from mere chagrin, that is to say, the saddest kind of drunkard, of which I had seen many examples in our district.

I had no near neighbors, except two or three toppers, whose conversation consisted for the most part of hiccups and sighs. Solitude was preferable to their society. At last I decided to go to bed as early as possible, and to dine as late as possible; in this way I shortened the evening and lengthened out the day, and I found that the plan answered very well.

Four versts from my house was a rich estate belonging to the Countess B — -; but nobody lived there except the steward. The Countess had only visited her estate once, in the first year of her married life, and then she had remained there no longer than a month. But in the second spring of my hermitical life a report was circulated that the Countess, with her husband, was coming to spend the summer on her estate. The report turned out to be true, for they arrived at the beginning of June.

The arrival of a rich neighbor is an important event in the lives of country people. The landed proprietors and the people of their households talk about it for two months beforehand and for three years afterwards. As for me, I must confess that the news of the arrival of a young and beautiful neighbor affected me strongly. I burned with impatience to see her, and the first Sunday after her arrival I set out after dinner for the village of A — -, to pay my respects to the Countess and her husband, as their nearest neighbor and most humble servant. A lackey conducted me into the Count's study, and then went to announce me. The spacious apartment was furnished with every possible luxury. Around the walls were cases filled with books and surmounted by bronze busts; over the marble mantelpiece was a large mirror; on the floor was a green cloth covered with carpets. Unaccustomed to luxury in my own poor corner, and not having seen the wealth of other people for a long time, I awaited the appearance of the Count with some little trepidation, as a suppliant from the provinces awaits the arrival of the minister. The door opened, and a handsome-looking man,

of about thirty- two years of age, entered the room. The Count approached me with a frank and friendly air; I endeavored to be self-possessed and began to introduce myself, but he anticipated me. We sat down. His conversation, which was easy and agreeable, soon dissipated my awkward bashfulness; and I was already beginning to recover my usual composure, when the Countess suddenly entered, and I became more confused than ever. She was indeed beautiful. The Count presented me. I wished to appear at ease, but the more I tried to assume an air of unconstraint, the more awkward I felt. They, in order to give me time to recover myself and to become accustomed to my new acquaintances, began to talk to each other, treating me as a good neighbor, and without ceremony. Meanwhile, I walked about the room, examining the books and pictures. I am no judge of pictures, but one of them attracted my attention. It represented some view in Switzerland, but it was not the painting that struck me, but the circumstance that the canvas was shot through by two bullets, one planted just above the other.

“A good shot that!” said I, turning to the Count.

“Yes,” replied he, “a very remarkable shot. . . . Do you shoot well?” he continued.

“Tolerably,” replied I, rejoicing that the conversation had turned at last upon a subject that was familiar to me. “At thirty paces I can manage to hit a card without fail, — I mean, of course, with a pistol that I am used to.”

“Really?” said the Countess, with a look of the greatest interest. “And you, my dear, could you hit a card at thirty paces?”

“Some day,” replied the Count, “we will try. In my time I did not shoot badly, but it is now four years since I touched a pistol.”

“Oh!” I observed, “in that case, I don’t mind laying a wager that Your Excellency will not hit the card at twenty paces; the pistol demands practice every day. I know that from experience. In our regiment I was reckoned one of the best shots. It once happened that I did not touch a pistol for a whole month, as I had sent mine to be mended; and would you believe it, Your Excellency, the first time I began to shoot again, I missed a bottle four times in succession at twenty paces. Our captain, a witty and amusing fellow, happened to be standing by, and he said to me: ‘It is evident, my friend, that your hand will not lift itself against the bottle.’ No, Your Excellency, you must not neglect to practise, or your hand will soon lose its cunning. The best shot that I ever met used to shoot at least three times every day before dinner. It was as much his custom to do this as it was to drink his daily glass of brandy.”

The Count and Countess seemed pleased that I had begun to talk.

“And what sort of a shot was he?” asked the Count.

“Well, it was this way with him, Your Excellency: if he saw a fly settle on the wall — you smile, Countess, but, before Heaven, it is the truth — if he saw a fly, he would call out: ‘Kouzka, my pistol!’ Kouzka would bring him a loaded pistol — bang! and the fly would be crushed against the wall.”

“Wonderful!” said the Count. “And what was his name?”

“Silvio, Your Excellency.”

“Silvio!” exclaimed the Count, starting up. “Did you know Silvio?”

“How could I help knowing him, Your Excellency: we were intimate friends; he was received in our regiment like a brother officer, but it is now five years since I had any tidings of him. Then Your Excellency also knew him?”

“Oh, yes, I knew him very well. Did he ever tell you of one very strange incident in his life?”

“Does Your Excellency refer to the slap in the face that he received from some blackguard at a ball?”

“Did he tell you the name of this blackguard?”

“No, Your Excellency, he never mentioned his name, . . . Ah! Your Excellency!” I continued, guessing the truth: “pardon me . . . I did not know . . . could it really have been you?”

“Yes, I myself,” replied the Count, with a look of extraordinary agitation; “and that bullet-pierced picture is a memento of our last meeting.”

“Ah, my dear,” said the Countess, “for Heaven’s sake, do not speak about that; it would be too terrible for me to listen to.”

“No,” replied the Count: “I will relate everything. He knows how I insulted his friend, and it is only right that he should know how Silvio revenged himself.”

The Count pushed a chair towards me, and with the liveliest interest I listened to the following story:

“Five years ago I got married. The first month — the honeymoon — I spent here, in this village. To this house I am indebted for the happiest moments of my life, as well as for one of its most painful recollections.

“One evening we went out together for a ride on horseback. My wife’s horse became restive; she grew frightened, gave the reins to me, and returned home on foot. I rode on before. In the courtyard I saw a travelling carriage, and I was told that in my study sat waiting for me a man, who would not give his name, but who merely said that he had business with me. I entered the room and saw in the darkness a man, covered with dust and wearing a beard of several days’ growth. He was standing there, near the fireplace. I approached him, trying to remember his features.

““You do not recognize me, Count?” said he, in a quivering voice.

““Silvio!” I cried, and I confess that I felt as if my hair had suddenly stood on end.

““Exactly,” continued he. ‘There is a shot due to me, and I have come to discharge my pistol. Are you ready?’

“His pistol protruded from a side pocket. I measured twelve paces and took my stand there in that corner, begging him to fire quickly, before my wife arrived. He hesitated, and asked for a light. Candles were brought in. I closed the doors, gave orders that nobody was to enter, and again begged him to fire. He drew out his pistol and took aim. . . . I counted the

seconds. . . . I thought of her. . . . A terrible minute passed! Silvio lowered his hand.

“‘I regret,’ said he, ‘that the pistol is not loaded with cherry- stones . . . the bullet is heavy. It seems to me that this is not a duel, but a murder. I am not accustomed to taking aim at unarmed men. Let us begin all over again; we will cast lots as to who shall fire first.’

“‘My head went round. . . . I think I raised some objection. . . . At last we loaded another pistol, and rolled up two pieces of paper. He placed these latter in his cap — the same through which I had once sent a bullet — and again I drew the first number.

“‘You are devilish lucky, Count,’ said he, with a smile that I shall never forget.

“‘I don’t know what was the matter with me, or how it was that he managed to make me do it . . . but I fired and hit that picture.’”

The Count pointed with his finger to the perforated picture; his face glowed like fire; the Countess was whiter than her own handkerchief; and I could not restrain an exclamation.

“‘I fired,” continued the Count, “and, thank Heaven, missed my aim. Then Silvio . . . at that moment he was really terrible . . . Silvio raised his hand to take aim at me. Suddenly the door opens, Masha rushes into the room, and with a loud shriek throws herself upon my neck. Her presence restored to me all my courage.

“‘My dear,’ said I to her, ‘don’t you see that we are joking? How frightened you are! Go and drink a glass of water and then come back to us; I will introduce you to an old friend and comrade.’

“‘Masha still doubted.

“‘Tell me, is my husband speaking the truth?’ said she, turning to the terrible Silvio: ‘is it true that you are only joking?’

“‘He is always joking, Countess,’ replied Silvio: ‘once he gave me a slap in the face in a joke; on another occasion he sent a bullet through my cap in a joke; and just now, when he fired at me and missed me, it was all in a joke. And now I feel inclined for a joke.’

“‘With these words he raised his pistol to take aim at me — right before her! Masha threw herself at his feet.

“‘Rise, Masha; are you not ashamed!’ I cried in a rage: ‘and you, sir, will you cease to make fun of a poor woman? Will you fire or not?’

“‘I will not,’ replied Silvio: ‘I am satisfied. I have seen your confusion, your alarm. I forced you to fire at me. That is sufficient. You will remember me. I leave you to your conscience.’

“‘Then he turned to go, but pausing in the doorway, and looking at the picture that my shot had passed through, he fired at it almost without taking aim, and disappeared. My wife had fainted away; the servants did not venture to stop him, the mere look of him filled them with terror. He went out upon the steps, called his coachman, and drove off before I could recover myself.’”

The Count was silent. In this way I learned the end of the story, whose beginning had once made such a deep impression upon me. The hero of it I never saw again. It is said that Silvio commanded a detachment of Hetairists during the revolt under Alexander Ipsilanti, and that he was killed in the battle of Skoulana.

THE SNOWSTORM



Translated by T. Keane

*Horses dash across the slopes,
Trampling snow deep-drifted...
By the wayside stands a church,
Lonely cross uplifted.*

*Suddenly a snowstorm flings
Tufted flakes about us,
O'er the sledge with whistling wing
Flies a crow to flout us.
Weird his cry, foreboding grief!
Gathering their forces,
Manes upraised, toward the dark
Peer the speeding horses...
Zhukovsky*

TOWARD the end of the year 1811, a memorable period for us, the good Gavril Gavrilovich R —

was living on his estate of Nenaradovo. He was celebrated throughout the district for his hospitality and kindheartedness. The neighbors were constantly visiting him: some to eat and drink; some to play “Boston” at five copecks with his wife, Praskovya Petrovna; and some to look at their daughter, Marya Gavrilovna, a pale, slender girl of seventeen. She was considered wealthy, and many desired her for themselves or for their sons.

Marya Gavrilovna had been brought up on French novels, and consequently was in love. The object of her choice was a poor sub-lieutenant, who was then on leave of absence in his village. It need scarcely be mentioned that the young man returned her passion with equal ardor, and that the parents of his beloved one, observing their mutual inclination, forbade their daughter to think of him, and gave him a worse reception than if he were a retired assessor.

Our lovers corresponded with each other and daily saw each other alone in the little pine wood or near the old chapel. There they exchanged vows of eternal love, lamented their cruel fate, and formed various plans. Corresponding and conversing in this way, they arrived quite naturally at the following conclusion:

If we cannot exist without each other, and the will of hard-hearted parents stands in the way of our happiness, why cannot we do without their consent?

Needless to mention that this happy idea originated in the mind of the young man, and that it was very congenial to the romantic imagination of Marya Gavrilovna.

The winter came and put a stop to their meetings, but their correspondence became all the more active. Vladimir Nikolayevich in every letter implored her to give herself up to him, to get married secretly, to hide for some time, and then throw themselves at the feet of their parents, who would, without any doubt, be touched at last by the heroic constancy and unhappiness of the lovers, and would assuredly say to them: "Children, come to our arms!"

Marya Gavrilovna hesitated for a long time, and many plans for elopement were rejected. At last she consented: on the appointed day she was not to take supper, but was to retire to her room under the pretext of a headache. Her maid was in the plot; they were both to go into the garden by the back stairs, and behind the garden, they would find ready a sledge, into which they were to get, and then drive straight to the church of Zhadrino, a village about five versts from Nenarodovo, where Vladimir would be waiting for them.

On the eve of the decisive day, Marya Gavrilovna did not sleep the whole night; she packed and tied up her linen and other articles of apparel, wrote a long letter to a sentimental young lady, a friend of hers, and another to her parents. She took leave of them in the most touching terms, urged the invincible strength of passion as an excuse for the step she was taking, and wound up with the assurance that she would consider it the happiest moment of her life, when she should be allowed to throw herself at the feet of her dear parents.

After having sealed both letters with a Tula seal, upon which were engraved two flaming hearts with a suitable inscription, she threw herself upon her bed just before daybreak, and dozed off: but even then she was constantly being awakened by terrible dreams. First it seemed to her that at the very moment when she seated herself in the sledge, in order to go and get married, her father stopped her, dragged her over the snow with agonizing rapidity, and threw her into a dark bottomless abyss, down which she fell headlong with an indescribable sinking of the heart. Then she saw Vladimir lying on the grass, pale and bloodstained. With his dying breath he implored her in a piercing voice to make haste and marry him.... Other abominable and absurd visions floated before her one after another. At last she arose, paler than usual, and with an unfeigned headache. Her father and mother observed her uneasiness; their tender solicitude and incessant inquiries: "What is the matter with you, Masha? Are you ill, Masha?" cut her to the heart. She tried to reassure them and to appear cheerful, but in vain.

Evening came. The thought, that this was the last day she would pass in the bosom of her family, weighed upon her heart. She was more dead than alive. In secret she took leave of everybody, of all the objects that surrounded her.

Supper was served; her heart began to beat violently. In a trembling voice she declared that she did not want any supper, and then took leave of her father and mother. They kissed her and blessed her as usual, and she could hardly restrain herself from weeping.

On reaching her own room, she threw herself into a chair and burst into tears. Her maid urged her to be calm and to take courage. Everything was ready. In half an hour Masha would leave for ever her parents' house, her room, and her peaceful girlish life....

Outside a snowstorm was raging; the wind howled, the shutters shook and rattled, and everything seemed to her to portend misfortune.

Soon all was quiet in the house: everyone was asleep. Masha wrapped herself in a shawl, put on a warm cloak, took her box in her hand, and went down the back staircase. Her maid followed her with two bundles. They descended into the garden. The snowstorm had not subsided; the wind blew in their faces, as if trying to stop the young criminal. With difficulty they reached the end of the garden. On the road a sledge awaited them. The chilled horses would not keep still; Vladimir's coachman was walking up and down in front of them, trying to restrain their impatience. He helped the young lady and her maid into the sledge, stowed away the box and the bundles, seized the reins, and the horses dashed off.

Having entrusted the young lady to the care of fate and to the skill of Teryoshka the coachman, we will return to our young lover.

All day long Vladimir had been driving about. In the morning he paid a visit to the priest of Zhadrino, and having come to an agreement with him after a great deal of difficulty, he then set out to seek for witnesses among the neighboring landowners. The first to whom he presented himself, a retired cornet about forty years old, whose name was Dravin, consented with pleasure. The adventure, he declared, reminded him of his young days and his pranks in the Hussars. He persuaded Vladimir to stay to dinner with him, and assured him that he would have no difficulty in finding the other two witnesses. And, indeed, immediately after dinner, appeared the surveyor Schmidt, wearing mustaches and spurs, and the son of the captain of police, a lad of sixteen, who had recently entered the Uhlans. They not only accepted Vladimir's proposal, but even vowed that they were ready to sacrifice their lives for him. Vladimir embraced them with rapture, and returned home to get everything ready.

It had been dark for some time. He dispatched his faithful Teryoshka to Nenaradovo with his troika and with detailed instructions, ordered for himself the one-horse sleigh and set out alone, without any coachman, for Zhadrino, where Marya Gavrilovna was due to arrive in about a couple of hours. He knew the road well, and it was only a twenty-minute ride.

But Vladimir scarcely found himself on the open road, when the wind rose and such a snowstorm came on that he could see nothing. In one minute the road was completely hidden; the landscape disappeared in a thick yellow fog, through which fell white flakes of snow; earth and sky merged into one. Vladimir found himself off the road, and tried vainly to

get back to it. His horse went on at random, and at every moment climbed either a snowdrift or sank into a hole, so that the sledge kept turning over. Vladimir's one effort was not to lose the right direction. But it seemed to him that more than half an hour had already passed, and he had not yet reached the Zhadrino wood. Another ten minutes elapsed — still no wood was to be seen. Vladimir drove across a field intersected by deep ravines. The snowstorm did not abate, the sky did not become any clearer. The horse began to grow tired, and the sweat rolled from Vladimir in great drops, in spite of the fact that he was constantly being half-buried in the snow.

At last Vladimir perceived that he was going in the wrong direction. He stopped, began to think, to recollect, and compare, and he felt convinced that he ought to have turned to the right. He turned to the right now. His horse could scarcely move forward. He had now been on the road for more than an hour. Zhadrino could not be far off. But on and on he went, and still no end to the field — nothing but snow-drifts and ravines. The sledge was constantly turning over, and as constantly being set right again. The time was passing: Vladimir began to grow seriously uneasy.

At last something dark appeared in the distance. Vladimir directed his course toward it. On drawing near, he perceived that it was a wood.

"Thank Heaven!" he thought, "I am not far off now."

He drove along by the edge of the wood, hoping by-and-by to come upon the well-known road or to pass round the wood; Zhadrino was situated just behind it. He soon found the road, and plunged among the dark trees, now denuded of leaves by the winter. The wind could not rage here; the road was smooth; the horse recovered courage, and Vladimir felt reassured.

But he drove on and on, and Zhadrino was not to be seen; there was no end to the wood. Vladimir discovered with horror that he had entered an unknown forest. Despair took possession of him. He whipped the horse; the poor animal broke into a trot, but soon slackened its pace, and in about a quarter of an hour it was scarcely able to drag one leg after the other, in spite of all the exertions of the unfortunate Vladimir.

Gradually the trees began to get sparser, and Vladimir emerged from the forest; but Zhadrino was not to be seen. It must now have been about midnight. Tears gushed from his eyes; he drove on at random. Meanwhile the storm had subsided, the clouds dispersed, and before him lay a level plain covered with a white undulating carpet. The night was tolerably clear. He saw, not far off, a little village, consisting of four or five houses. Vladimir drove toward it. At the first cottage he jumped out of the sledge, ran to the window and began to knock. After a few minutes, the wooden shutter was raised, and an old man thrust out his gray beard.

"What do you want?"

"Is Zhadrino far from here?"

"Zhadrino? Far from here?"

"Yes, yes! Is it far?"

"Not far; about ten versts."

At this reply, Vladimir clutched his hair and stood motionless, like a man condemned to death.

"Where do you come from?" continued the old man.

Vladimir had not the heart to answer the question.

"Listen, old man," said he: "can you find any horses to take me to Zhadrino?"

"How should we have such things as horses?" replied the peasant.

"Can I at least get a guide? I will pay him whatever he asks."

"Wait," said the old man, closing the shutter; "I will send my son out to you; he will direct you."

Vladimir waited. But a minute had scarcely elapsed when he began knocking again. The shutter was raised, and the beard again appeared. the snowstorm "What do you want?"

"What about your son?"

"He'll be out presently; he is putting on his boots. Are you cold? Come in and warm yourself."

"Thank you; send your son out quickly."

The door creaked: a lad came out with a cudgel and led the way, now pointing out the road, now searching for it among the snow drifts.

"What time is it?" Vladimir asked him.

"It will soon be daylight," replied the young peasant. Vladimir did not say another word.

The cocks were crowing, and it was already light when they reached Zhadrino. The church was locked. Vladimir paid the guide and drove into the priest's courtyard. His troika was not there. What news awaited him!...

But let us return to the worthy proprietors of Nena- radovo, and see what is happening there.

Nothing.

The old people awoke and went into the parlor, Gavril Gavrilovich in a night-cap and flannel doublet, Praskovya Petrovna in a wadded dressing-gown. The samovar was brought in, and Gavril Gavrilovich sent a servant to ask Marya Gavrilovna how she was and how she had passed the night. The servant returned, saying that the young lady had not slept very well, but that she felt better now, and that she would come down presently into the parlor. And indeed, the door opened and Marya Gavrilovna entered the room and wished her father and mother good morning.

"How is your head, Masha?" asked Gavril Gavrilovich.

"Better, papa," replied Masha.

"You must have gotten your headache yesterday from charcoal fumes," said Praskovya Petrovna.

"Very likely, mamma," replied Masha.

The day passed happily enough, but in the night Masha was taken ill. They sent to town for a doctor. He arrived in the evening and found the sick girl delirious. A violent fever ensued, and for two weeks the poor patient hovered on the brink of the grave.

Nobody in the house knew anything about her intended elopement. The letters written the evening before, had been burnt; and her maid, dreading the wrath of her master, had not whispered a word about it to anybody. The priest, the retired cornet, the mus- tached surveyor, and the little Uhlan were discreet, and not without reason. Teryoshka, the coachman, never uttered one word too much about it, even when he was drunk. Thus the secret was kept by more than half-a- dozen conspirators.

But Marya Gavrilovna herself divulged her secret during her delirious ravings. Her words were so disconnected, however, that her mother, who never left her bedside, could only understand from them that her daughter was deeply in love with Vladimir Nikolaye- vich, and that probably love was the cause of her illness. She consulted her husband and some of her neighbors, and at last it was unanimously decided that such was evidently Marya Gavrilovna's fate, that a woman cannot escape her destined husband even on horseback, that poverty is not a crime, that one does not marry wealth, but a man, etc., etc. Moral maxims are wonderfully useful in those cases where we can invent little in our own justification.

In the meantime the young lady began to recover. Vladimir had not been seen for a long time in the house of Gavril Gavrilovich. He was afraid of the usual reception. It was resolved to send and announce to him an unexpected piece of good news: the consent of Marya's parents to his marriage with their daughter.

But what was the astonishment of the proprietor of Nenaradovo, when, in reply to their invitation, they received from him a half-insane letter. He informed them that he would never set foot in their house again, and begged them to forget an unhappy creature whose only hope was death. A few days afterwards they heard that Vladimir had joined the army again. This was in the year 1812.

For a long time they did not dare to announce this to Masha, who was now convalescent. She never mentioned the name of Vladimir. Some months afterwards, finding his name in the list of those who had distinguished themselves and been severely wounded at Borodino, she fainted away, and it was feared that she would have another attack of fever. But, Heaven be thanked! the fainting fit had no serious consequences.

Another misfortune fell upon her: Gavril Gavrilovich died, leaving her the heiress to all his property. But the inheritance did not console her; she shared sincerely the grief of poor Praskovya Petrovna, vowing that she would never leave her. They both quitted Nenaradovo, the scene of so many sad recollections, and went to live on another estate.

Suitors crowded round the charming heiress, but she gave not the slightest hope to any of them. Her mother sometimes exhorted her to make a choice; but Marya Gavrilovna shook her head and became pensive. Vladimir no longer existed: he had died in Moscow on the eve of the entry of the French. His memory seemed to be held sacred by Masha; at least she treasured up everything that could remind her of him: books that he had once read, his drawings, his music, and verses that he had copied out for

her. The neighbors, hearing of all this, were astonished at her constancy, and awaited with curiosity the hero who should at last triumph over the melancholy fidelity of this virgin Artemisia.

Meanwhile the war had ended gloriously. Our regiments returned from abroad, and the people went out to meet them. The bands played the songs of the conquered: "Vive Henri-Quatre," Tyrolese waltzes and airs from "Joconde." Officers, who had set out for the war almost mere lads, returned, grown men in the martial air, their breasts hung with crosses. The soldiers chatted gaily among themselves, constantly using French and German words in their speech. Unforgettable time! Time of glory and enthusiasm! How the Russian heart throbbed at the word "Fatherland!" How sweet were the tears of reunion! With what unanimity did we mingle feelings of national pride with love for the Czar! And for him — what a moment!

The women, the Russian women, were then incomparable. Their usual coldness disappeared. Their enthusiasm was truly intoxicating, when welcoming the conquerors they cried "Hurrah!"

"And tossed their caps into the air!"

What officer of that time does not confess that to the Russian women he was indebted for his best and most precious reward?

At this brilliant period Marya Gavrilovna was living with her mother in the province of — , and did not see how both capitals celebrated the return of the troops. But in the districts and villages the general enthusiasm was, if possible, even greater. The appearance of an officer in those sections was for him a veritable triumph, and the lover in a frock coat fared ill in his vicinity.

We have already said that, in spite of her coldness, Marya Gavrilovna was, as before, surrounded by suitors. But all had to withdraw when the wounded Colonel Burmin of the Hussars, with the Order of St.

GEORGE in his button-hole, and with an "interesting pallor," as the young ladies of the neighborhood observed, appeared at the manor. He was about twenty-six years of age. He had obtained leave of absence to visit HIS estate, which was near that of Marya Gavrilovna. Marya bestowed special attention upon him. In his presence her habitual pensiveness disappeared. It canNOT be said that she flirted with him, but a poet, observING her behavior, would have said:

"Se amor non è, che dunque?"

Burmin was indeed a very charming young man. He had the sort of mind which pleases women: decorous and keen, without any pretensions, and inclined to carefree mockery. His behavior toward Marya Gavrilovna was simple and frank, but whatever she said or did, both his soul and his eyes followed her. He seemed to be of a quiet and modest disposition, though it was reported that he had once been a terrible rake; but this did not injure him in the opinion of Marya Gavrilovna, who — like all young ladies —

excused with pleasure follies that gave indication of boldness and ardor of temperament.

But more than everything else- — more than his tenderness, more than his agreeable conversation, more than his interesting pallor, more than his arm in a sling — the silence of the young Hussar excited her curiosity and imagination. She could not but confess that he pleased her very much; probably he, too, with his intelligence and experience, had already observed that she singled him out; how was it then that she had not yet seen him at her feet or heard his declaration? What restrained him? Was it timidity, or pride, or the coquetry of a crafty ladies' man? It was a puzzle to her. After long reflection, she came to the conclusion that timidity alone was the cause of it, and she resolved to encourage him by greater attention and, if circumstances should render it necessary, even by an exhibition of tenderness. She was preparing a startling denouement, and waited with impatience for the moment of the romantic explanation. A secret, of whatever nature it may be, always presses heavily upon the female heart. Her strategy had the desired success; at least Burmin fell into such a reverie, and his black eyes rested with such fire upon her, that the decisive moment seemed close at hand. The neighbors spoke about the marriage as if it were a settled matter, and good Praskovya Petrovna rejoiced that her daughter had at last found a worthy suitor.

On one occasion the old lady was sitting alone in the parlor, playing patience, when Burmin entered the room and immediately inquired for Marya Gavrilovna.

"She is in the garden," replied the old lady "go out to her, and I will wait here for you."

Burmin went, and the old lady made the sign of the cross and thought: "Perhaps the business will be settled today!"

Burmin found Marya Gavrilovna near the pond, under a willow-tree, with a book in her hands, and in a white dress: a veritable heroine of a novel. After the first few questions, Marya Gavrilovna purposely allowed the conversation to drop, thereby increasing their mutual embarrassment, from which there was no possible way of escape except only by a sudden and decisive declaration.

And that is what happened: Burmin, feeling the difficulty of his position, declared that he had long sought an opportunity to open his heart to her, and requested a moment's attention. Marya Gavrilovna closed her book and cast down her eyes, as a sign of consent.

"I love you," said Burmin: "I love you passionately."

Maria Gavrilovna blushed and lowered her head still further. "I have acted imprudently in indulging the sweet habit of seeing and hearing you daily...." Marya Gavrilovna recalled to mind the first letter of St. Preux. "But it is now too late to resist my fate; the remembrance of you, your dear incomparable image, will henceforth be the torment and the consolation of my life, but there still remains a painful duty for me to perform — to reveal to you a terrible secret which will place between us an insurmountable

barrier....”

“That barrier has always existed,” interrupted Marya Gavrilovna hastily: “I could never be your wife.”

“I know,” replied he calmly: “I know that you once loved, but death and three years of mourning.... Dear, kind Marya Gavrilovna, do not try to deprive me of my last consolation: the thought that you would have consented to make me happy, if...”

“Don’t speak, for Heaven’s sake, don’t speak. You torture me.”

“Yes, I know, I feel that you would have been mine, but — I am the most miserable creature under the sun — I am already married!”

Maria Gavrilovna looked at him in astonishment.

“I am already married,” continued Burmin: “I have been married four years, and I do not know who my wife is, or where she is, or whether I shall ever see her again!”

“What are you saying?” exclaimed Marya Gavrilovna. “How very strange! Continue: I will relate to you afterwards.... But continue, I beg of you.”

“At the beginning of the year 1812,” said Burmin, “I was hastening to Vilna, where my regiment was stationed. Arriving late one evening at one of the post-stations, I ordered the horses to be got ready as quickly PROSE

as possible, when suddenly a terrible snowstorm came on, and the postmaster and drivers advised me to wait till it had passed over. I followed their advice, but an unaccountable uneasiness took possession of me: it seemed as if someone were pushing me forward. Meanwhile the snowstorm did not subside; I could endure it no longer, and again ordering out the horses, I started off at the height of the storm. The driver conceived the idea of following the course of the river, which would shorten our journey by three versts. The banks were covered with snow: the driver drove past the place where we should have come out upon the road, and so we found ourselves in an unknown part of the country.... The storm did not abate; I saw a light in the distance, and I ordered the driver to proceed toward it. We reached a village; in the wooden church there was a light. The church was open. Outside the fence stood several sledges, and people were passing in and out through the porch.

““This way! this way!” cried several voices.

“I ordered the driver to proceed.

““In the name of Heaven, where have you been loitering?” somebody said to me. ‘The bride has fainted away; the priest does not know what to do, and we were just getting ready to go back. Get out as quickly as you can.’

“I got out of the sledge without saying a word, and went into the church, which was feebly lit up by two or three tapers. A young girl was sitting on a bench in a dark corner of the church; another girl was rubbing her temples.

““Thank God!” said the latter, ‘you have come at last. You have almost killed the young lady.’

“The old priest advanced toward me, and said:

“Do you wish me to begin?”

“Begin, begin, father,” I replied, absently.

“The young girl was raised up. She seemed to me not at all bad-looking.... Impelled by an incomprehensible, unpardonable levity, I placed myself by her side in front of the pulpit; the priest hurried on; three men and a maid supported the bride and only occupied themselves with her. We were married.

“Kiss each other!” said the witnesses to us.

“My wife turned her pale face toward me. I was about to kiss her, when she exclaimed: ‘Oh! it is not he! it is not he!’ and fell in a swoon.

“The witnesses gazed at me in alarm. I turned round and left the church without the least hindrance, flung myself into the *kibitka* and cried: ‘Drive off!’”

“My God!” exclaimed Marya Gavrilovna. “And do you not know what became of your poor wife?”

“I do not know,” replied Burmin; “neither do I know the name of the village where I was married, nor the post-station where I set out from. At that time I attached so little importance to my wicked prank, that on leaving the church, I fell asleep, and did not awake till the next morning after reaching the third station. The servant, who was then with me, died during the campaign, so that I have no hope of ever discovering the woman upon whom I played such a cruel joke, and who is now so cruelly avenged.”

“My God, my God!” cried Marya Gavrilovna, seizing him by the hand: “then it was you! And you do not recognize me?”

Burmin blanched — and threw himself at her feet.

THE UNDERTAKER



Translated by T. Keane

*Are coffins not beheld each day,
The gray hairs of an aging world?*
Derzhavin

THE last of the effects of the undertaker, Adrian Prokhorov, were piled upon the hearse, and a couple of sorry-looking jades dragged themselves along for the fourth time from Basmannaya to Nikitskaya, whither the undertaker was removing with all his household. After locking up the shop, he posted upon the door a placard announcing that the house was for sale or rent, and then made his way on foot to his new abode. On approaching the little yellow house, which had so long captivated his imagination, and which at last he had bought for a considerable sum, the old undertaker was astonished to find that his heart did not rejoice. When he crossed the unfamiliar threshold and found his new home in the greatest confusion, he sighed for his old hovel, where for eighteen years the strictest order had prevailed. He began to scold his two daughters and the servants for their slowness, and then set to work to help them himself. Order was soon established; the ikon-case, the cupboard with the crockery, the table, the sofa, and the bed occupied the corners reserved for them in the back room; in the kitchen and parlor were placed the master's wares — coffins of all colors and of all sizes, together with cupboards containing mourning hats, cloaks and torches.

Over the gate was placed a sign representing a plump Cupid with an inverted torch in his hand and bearing this inscription: "Plain and colored coffins sold and upholstered here; coffins also let out on hire, and old ones repaired."

The girls retired to their bedroom; Adrian made a tour of inspection of his quarters, and then sat down by the window and ordered the samovar to be prepared.

The enlightened reader knows that Shakespeare and Walter Scott have both represented their grave-diggers as merry and facetious individuals, in order that the contrast might more forcibly strike our imagination. Out of respect for the truth, we cannot follow their example, and we are compelled to confess that the disposition of our undertaker was in perfect harmony with his gloomy metier. Adrian Prokhorov was usually sullen and pensive. He rarely opened his mouth, except to scold his daughters when he found them standing idle and gazing out of the window at the passers-by, or to ask for his wares an exorbitant price from those who had the misfortune — or sometimes the pleasure — of needing them. And so Adrian, sitting near the

window and drinking his seventh cup of tea, was immersed as usual in melancholy reflections. He thought of the pouring rain which, just a week before, had commenced to beat down during the funeral of the retired brigadier. Many of the cloaks had shrunk in consequence of the downpour, and many of the hats had been put quite out of shape. He foresaw unavoidable expenses, for his old stock of funeral apparel was in a pitiable condition. He hoped to compensate himself for his losses by the burial of old Trukhina, the merchant's wife, who for more than a year had been upon the point of death. But Trukhina lay dying in Razgulyay, and Prokhorov was afraid that her heirs, in spite of their promise, would not take the trouble to send so far for him, but would make arrangements with the nearest undertaker.

These reflections were suddenly interrupted by three masonic knocks at the door.

"Who is there?" asked the undertaker.

The door opened, and a man, who at first glance could be recognized as a German artisan, entered the room, and with a jovial air advanced toward the undertaker.

"Pardon me, good neighbor," said he in that Russian dialect which to this day we cannot hear without a smile: "pardon me for disturbing you.... I wished to make your acquaintance as soon as possible. I am a shoemaker, my name is Gottlieb Schultz, and I live across the street, in that little house just facing your windows. To-morrow I am going to celebrate my silver wedding, and I have come to invite you and your daughters to dine with us."

The invitation was cordially accepted. The undertaker asked the shoemaker to seat himself and take a cup of tea, and thanks to the open-hearted disposition of Gottlieb Schultz, they were soon engaged in friendly conversation.

"How is business with you?" asked Adrian.

"So so," replied Schultz; "I can't complain. But my wares are not like yours: the living can do without shoes, but the dead cannot do without coffins."

"Very true," observed Adrian; "but if a living person hasn't anything to buy shoes with, he goes barefoot, and holds his peace, if you please; but a dead beggar gets his coffin for nothing."

In this manner the conversation was carried on between them for some time; at last the shoemaker rose and took leave of the undertaker, renewing his invitation.

The next day, exactly at twelve o'clock, the undertaker and his daughters issued from the wicket-door of their newly purchased residence, and went to their neighbor's. I will not stop to describe the Russian *caftan* of Adrian Prokhorov, nor the European toilettes of Akulina and Darya, deviating in this respect from the custom of modern novelists. But I do not think it superfluous to observe that the two girls had on the yellow hats and red shoes, which they were accustomed to don on solemn occasions only.

The shoemaker's little dwelling was filled with guests, consisting chiefly of German artisans with their wives and apprentices. Of the Russian officials there was present but one, Yurko the Finn, a constable, who, in spite of his humble calling, was the special object of the host's attention. Like Pogorelsky's postman, for twenty-five years he had faithfully discharged his duties. The conflagration of 1812, which destroyed the ancient capital, destroyed also his little yellow booth. But immediately after the expulsion of the enemy, a new one appeared in its place, painted gray and with little white Doric columns, and Yurko again began to pace to and fro before it, *with his ax and armor of coarse cloth*. He was known to the greater part of the Germans who lived near the Nikitskaya Gate, and some of them had even spent Sunday night beneath his roof.

Adrian immediately made himself acquainted with him, as with a man whom, sooner or later, he might have need of, and when the guests took their places at the table, they sat down beside each other. Herr Schultz and his wife, and their daughter Lotchen, a young girl of seventeen, did the honors of the table and helped the cook to serve. The beer flowed in streams; Yurko ate like four, and Adrian in no way yielded to him; his daughters, however, stood upon their dignity. The conversation, which was carried on in German, gradually grew more and more noisy. Suddenly the host requested a moment's attention, and uncorking a sealed bottle, he said loudly in Russian: "To the health of my good Louise!" The imitation champagne foamed. The host tenderly kissed the fresh face of his partner, and the guests drank noisily to the health of the good Louise.

"To the health of my amiable guests!" exclaimed the host, uncorking a second bottle; and the guests thanked him by draining their glasses once more.

Then followed a succession of toasts. The health of each individual guest was drunk; they drank to Moscow and to a round dozen of little German towns; they drank to the health of all guilds in general and of each in particular; they drank to the health of the masters and apprentices. Adrian drank with assiduity and became so jovial, that he proposed a facetious toast himself. Suddenly one of the guests, a fat baker, raised his glass and exclaimed:

"To the health of those for whom we work, our customers!"

This proposal like all the others, was joyously and unanimously received. The guests began to salute each other; the tailor bowed to the shoemaker, the shoemaker to the tailor, the baker to both, the whole company to the baker, and so on. In the midst of these mutual congratulations, Yurko exclaimed, turning to his neighbor:

"Come, little father! Drink to the health of your corpses!"

Everybody laughed, but the undertaker considered himself insulted, and frowned. Nobody noticed it, the guests continued to drink, and the bells had already rung for vespers when they rose from the table.

The guests dispersed at a late hour, the greater part of them in a very merry mood. The fat baker and the bookbinder, whose face seemed as if

bound in red morocco, linked their arms in those of Yurko and conducted him back to his booth, thus observing the proverb: "One good turn deserves another."

The undertaker returned home drunk and angry.

"Why is it," he argued aloud, "why is it that my trade is not as honest as any other? Is an undertaker brother to the hangman? Why did those heathens laugh? Is an undertaker a buffoon? I wanted to invite them to my new house and give them a feast, but now I'll do nothing of the kind. Instead of inviting them, I will invite those for whom I work: the orthodox dead."

"What is the matter, master?" said the servant, who was engaged at that moment in taking off his boots: "why do you talk such nonsense? Make the sign of the cross! Invite the dead to your new house! What nonsense!"

"Yes, by God! I will invite them," continued Adrian, "and that, too, for tomorrow!... Do me the favor, my benefactors, to come and feast with me tomorrow evening; I will regale you with what God has sent me."

With these words the undertaker turned into bed and soon began to snore.

It was still dark when Adrian was roused out of his sleep. Trukhina, the merchant's wife, had died during the course of that very night, and a special messenger was sent off on horseback by her clerk to carry the news to Adrian. The undertaker gave him ten copecks to buy brandy with, dressed himself as hastily as possible, took a *droshky* and set out for Razgulyay. At the gate of the house in which the deceased lay, the police had already taken their stand, and the trades-people were busily moving back and forth, like ravens that smell a dead body. The deceased lay upon a table, yellow as wax, but not yet disfigured by decomposition. Around her stood her relatives, neighbors and domestic servants. All the windows were open; tapers were burning; and the priests were reading the prayers for the dead. Adrian went up to the nephew of Trukhina, a young shopman in a fashionable jacket, and informed him that the coffin, wax candles, pall, and the other funeral accessories would be immediately delivered in good order. The heir thanked him in an absent-minded manner, saying that he would not bargain about the price, but would rely upon his acting in everything according to his conscience. The undertaker, in accordance with his custom, swore that he would not charge him too much, exchanged significant glances with the clerk, and then departed to commence operations.

The whole day was spent in passing to and fro between Razgulyay and the Nikitskaya Gate. Toward evening everything was finished, and he returned home on foot, after having dismissed his driver. It was a moonlight night. The undertaker reached the Nikitskaya Gate in safety. Near the Church of the Ascension he was hailed by our acquaintance Yurko, who, recognizing the undertaker, wished him good night. It was late. The undertaker was just approaching his house, when suddenly he fancied he saw some one ap- I proach his gate, open the wicket, and disappear within.

“What does that mean?” thought Adrian. “Who can be wanting me again? Can it be a thief come to rob me? Or have my foolish girls got lovers coming after them? It means no good, I fear!”

And the undertaker thought of calling his friend Yurko to his assistance. But at that moment, another person approached the wicket and was about to enter, but seeing the master of the house hastening toward him, he stopped and took off his three-cornered hat. His face seemed familiar to Adrian, but in his hurry he was not able to examine it closely.

“You are favoring me with a visit,” said Adrian, out of breath. “Walk in, I beg of you.”

“Don’t stand on ceremony, sir,” replied the other, in a hollow voice; “you go first, and show your guests the way.”

Adrian had no time to spend upon ceremony. The wicket was open; he ascended the steps followed by the other. Adrian thought he could hear people walking about in his rooms.

“What the devil does all this mean!” he thought to himself, and he hastened to enter. But the sight that met his eyes caused his legs to give way beneath him.

The room was full of corpses. The moon, shining through the windows, lit up their yellow and blue faces, sunken mouths, dim, half-closed eyes, and protruding noses. Adrian, with horror, recognized in them people that he himself had buried, and in the guest who had entered with him, the brigadier who had been buried during the pouring rain. They all, ladies and gentlemen, surrounded the undertaker, with bowings and salutations, except one poor man lately buried gratis, who, conscious and ashamed of his rags, did not venture to approach, but meekly kept to a corner. All the others were decently dressed: the female corpses in caps and ribbons, the officials in uniforms, but with their beards unshaven, the tradesmen in their holiday *caftans*.

“You see, Prokhorov,” said the brigadier in the name of all the honorable company, “we have all risen in response to your invitation. Only those have stopped at home who were unable to come, who have crumbled to pieces and have nothing left but fleshless bones. But even of these there was one who hadn’t the patience to remain behind — so much did he want to come and see you....”

At this moment a little skeleton pushed his way through the crowd and approached Adrian. His skull smiled affably at the undertaker. Shreds of green and red cloth and rotten linen hung on him here and there as on a pole, and the bones of his feet rattled inside his big jackboots, like pestles in mortars.

“You do not recognize me, Prokhorov,” said the skeleton. “Don’t you remember the retired sergeant of the Guard, Pyotr Petrovich Kurilkin, the same to whom, in the year 1799, you sold your first coffin, and a deal one at that, instead of oak, as agreed?”

With these words the corpse stretched out his bony arms toward him; but Adrian, collecting all his strength, shrieked and pushed him away. Pyotr

Petrovich staggered, fell and crumbled to pieces. Among the corpses arose a murmur of indignation; all stood up for the honor of their companion, and they overwhelmed Adrian with such threats and curses, that the poor host, deafened by their shrieks and almost crushed to death, lost his presence of mind, fell upon the bones of the retired sergeant of the Guard, and swooned away.

For some time the sun had been shining upon the bed on which the undertaker lay. At last he opened his eyes and saw before him the servant attending to the samovar. With horror, Adrian recalled all the incidents of the previous day. Trukhina, the brigadier, and the sergeant Kurilkin, rose vaguely before his imagination. He waited in silence for the servant to open the conversation and inform him of the events of the night.

“How you have slept, Adrian Prokhorovich!” said Aksinya, handing him his dressing-gown. “Your neighbor, the tailor, has been here, and the constable also called to inform you that today is his name-day; but you were so sound asleep, that we did not wish to wake you.

“Did anyone come for me from the late Trukhina?”

“The late? Is she dead, then?”

“What a fool you are! Didn’t you yourself help me yesterday to prepare the things for her funeral?”

“Have you taken leave of your senses, master, or have you not yet recovered from the effects of yesterday’s drinking-bout? What funeral was there yesterday? You spent the whole day feasting at the German’s, and then came home drunk and threw yourself upon the bed, and have slept till this hour, when the bells have already rung for mass.”

“Really!” said the undertaker, greatly relieved. “Yes, indeed,” replied the servant. “Well, since that is the case, make tea as quickly as possible and call my daughters.”

THE POSTMASTER



Translated by T. Keane

*This tyrant, a collegiate recorder,
Still keeps the posting station in good order.*

Prince Vyazemsky

WHO has not cursed postmasters, who has not quarreled with them? Who, in a moment of anger, has not demanded from them the fatal book in order to record in it unavailing complaints of their extortions, rudeness and carelessness? Who does not look upon them as monsters of the human race, equal to the attorneys of old, or, at least, the Murom highwaymen? Let us, however, be just; let us place ourselves in their position, and perhaps we shall begin to judge them with more indulgence. What is a postmaster? A veritable martyr of the fourteenth class protected by his rank from blows only, and that not always (I appeal to the conscience of my readers). What is the function of this tyrant, as Prince Vyazemsky jokingly calls him? Is he not an actual galley-slave? He has no rest either day or night. All the vexation accumulated during the course of a wearisome journey the traveler vents upon the postmaster. Should the weather prove intolerable, the road abominable, the driver obstinate, the horses stubborn — the postmaster is to blame. Entering into his poor abode, the traveler looks upon him as an enemy, and the postmaster is fortunate if he suc-

ceeds in soon getting rid of his unbidden guest; but if there should happen to be no horses!... Heavens! what volleys of abuse, what threats are showered upon his head! When it rains, when it is muddy, he is compelled to run about the village; during times of storm and bitter frost, he is glad to seek shelter in the entry, if only to enjoy a minute's repose from the shouting and jostling of incensed travelers.

A general arrives: the trembling postmaster gives him the two last *troikas*, including that intended for the courier. The general drives off without uttering a word of thanks. Five minutes afterwards — a bell!... and a courier throws down upon the table before him his order for fresh post-horses!... Let us bear all this well in mind, and, instead of anger, our hearts will be filled with sincere compassion. A few words more. During a period of twenty years I have traversed Russia in every direction; I know nearly all the post roads, and I am acquainted with several generations of drivers. There are very few postmasters that I do not know personally, and few with whom I have not had something to do. I hope shortly to publish the curious observations that I have noted down during my travels. For the present I will only say that the class of postmasters is presented to the public in a very false light. These much-calumniated officials are generally very

peaceful persons, obliging by nature, disposed to be sociable, modest in their pretensions to honors and not too greedy. From their conversation (which traveling gentlemen very unreasonably scorn) much may be learnt that is both curious and instructive. For my own part, I confess that I prefer their talk to that of some official of the sixth class traveling on government business.

It may easily be supposed that I have friends among the honorable body of postmasters. Indeed, the memory of one of them is precious to me. Circumstances once brought us together, and it is of him that I now intend to tell my amiable readers.

In the month of May of the year 1816, I happened to be traveling through the X. Government, along a route that has since been abandoned. I then held an inferior rank, and I traveled by post stages, paying the fare for two horses. As a consequence, the postmasters treated me with very little ceremony, and I often had to take by force what, in my opinion, belonged to me by right. Being young and hot-tempered, I was indignant at the baseness and cowardice of the postmaster, when the latter harnessed to the coach of some gentleman of rank, the horses prepared for me. It was a long time, too, before I could get accustomed to being served out of my turn by a discriminating flunkey at the governor's dinner. Today the one and the other seem to me to be in the natural order of things. Indeed, what would become of us, if, instead of the generally observed rule: "Let rank honor rank," another were to be brought into use, as for example: "Let mind honor mind?" What disputes would arise! And whom would the butler serve first? But to return to my story.

The day was hot. About three versts from the N. station a drizzling rain came on, and in a few minutes it began to pour down in torrents and I was drenched to the skin. On arriving at the station, my first care was to change my clothes as quickly as possible, my second to ask for some tea.

"Hi! Dunya!" cried the postmaster: "prepare the samovar and go and get some cream."

At these words, a young girl of about fourteen years of age appeared from behind the partition, and ran out into the entry. Her beauty struck me.

"Is that your daughter?" I inquired of the postmaster.

"That is my daughter," he replied, with a look of gratified pride; "and she is so sharp and sensible, just like her late mother."

Then he began to register my traveling passport, and I occupied myself with examining the pictures that adorned his humble but tidy abode. They illustrated the story of the Prodigal Son. In the first, a venerable old man, in a night-cap and dressing-gown, was taking leave of the restless lad, who was hastily accepting his blessing and a bag of money. In the next picture, the dissolute conduct of the young man was depicted in vivid colors: he was represented sitting at table surrounded by false friends and shameless women. Further on, the ruined youth, in rags and a three-cornered hat, was tending swine and sharing with them their food: his face expressed deep grief and repentance. The last picture represented his return to his father:

the good old man, in the same night-cap and dressing- gown, runs forward to meet him; the prodigal son is on his knees; in the distance the cook is killing the fatted calf, and the elder brother is asking the servants the cause of all the rejoicing. Under each picture I read some suitable German verses. All this I have preserved in my memory to the present day, as well as the little pots of balsamine, the bed with gay curtains, and the other objects with which I was then surrounded. I can see, as though he were before me, the host himself, a man of about fifty years of age, healthy and vigorous, in his long green coat with three medals on faded ribbons.

I had scarcely settled my account with my old driver, when Dunya returned with the samovar. The little coquette saw at the second glance the impression she had produced upon me; she lowered her large blue eyes; I began to talk to her; she answered me without the least timidity, like a girl who has seen the world. I offered her father a glass of punch, to Dunya herself I gave a cup of tea, and then the three of us began to converse together, as if we were old acquaintances.

The horses had long been ready, but I felt reluctant to take leave of the postmaster and his daughter. At last I bade them good-bye, the father wished me a pleasant journey, the daughter accompanied me to the coach. In the entry I stopped and asked her permission to kiss her; Dunya consented.... I can reckon up a great many kisses

Since first I chose this occupation,

but not one which has left behind such a long, such a pleasant recollection.

Several years passed, and circumstances led me to the same route, and to the same neighborhood.

"But," thought I, "perhaps the old postmaster has been changed, and Dunya may already be married."

The thought that one or the other of them might be dead also flashed through my mind, and I approached the N. station with a sad foreboding. The horses drew up before the little post-house. On entering the room, I immediately recognized the pictures illustrating the story of the Prodigal Son. The table and the bed stood in the same places as before, but the flowers were no longer on the window-sills, and everything around indicated decay and neglect.

The postmaster was asleep under his sheep-skin coat; my arrival awoke him, and he stood up.... It was certainly Samson Vyrin, but how aged! While he was preparing to register my traveling passport, I gazed at his gray hair, the deep wrinkles upon his face, that had not been shaved for a long time, his bent back, and I was astonished to see how three or four years had been able to transform a vigorous individual into a feeble old man.

"Do you recognize me?" I asked him: "we are old acquaintances."

"Maybe," replied he sullenly; "this is a high road, and many travelers have stopped here."

"Is your Dunya well?" I continued.

The old man frowned.

"God knows," he replied.

"Probably she is married?" said I.

The old man pretended not to have heard my question, and went on reading my passport in a low tone. I ceased questioning him and ordered some tea. Curiosity began to torment me, and I hoped that the punch would loosen the tongue of my old acquaintance.

I was not mistaken; the old man did not refuse the proffered glass. I observed that the rum dispelled his sullenness. At the second glass he began to talk; he remembered me, or appeared to do so, and I heard from him a story, which at the time, deeply interested and affected me.

"So you knew my Dunya?" he began. "But who did not know her? Ah, Dunya, Dunya! What a girl she was! Everybody who passed this way praised her; nobody had a word to say against her. The ladies used to give her presents — now a handkerchief, now a pair of earrings. The gentlemen used to stop on purpose, as if to dine or to take supper, but in reality only to take a longer look at her. However angry a gentleman might be, in her presence he grew calm and spoke graciously to me. Would you believe it, sir: couriers and government messengers used to talk to her for half an hour at a stretch. It was she held the home together; she put everything in order, got everything ready, and looked after everything. And I, like an old fool, could not look at her enough, could not idolize her enough. Did I not love my Dunya? Did I not indulge my child? Was not her life a happy one? But no, there is no escaping misfortune: there is no evading what has been decreed."

Then he began to tell me the story of his trouble in detail. Three years earlier, one winter evening, when the postmaster was ruling a new register, and his daughter behind the partition was sewing a dress, a *troika* drove up, and a traveler in a Circassian cap and military cloak, and enveloped in a shawl, entered the room and demanded horses. The horses were all out. On being told this, the traveler raised his voice and whip; but Dunya, accustomed to such scenes, ran out from behind the partition and graciously inquired of the traveler whether he would not like something to eat and drink.

The appearance of Dunya produced the usual effect. The traveler's anger subsided; he consented to wait for horses, and ordered supper. Having taken off his wet shaggy cap, and divested himself of his shawl and cloak, the traveler was seen to be a tall, young Hussar with a small black mustache. He settled down, and began to converse gaily with the postmaster and his daughter. Supper was served. Meanwhile the horses returned, and the postmaster ordered them, without being fed, to be harnessed immediately to the traveler's *kibitka*. But on returning to the room, he found the young man lying almost unconscious on the bench; he had been taken ill, his head ached, it was impossible for him to continue his journey. What was to be done? The postmaster gave up his own bed to him, and it was decided that if the sick man did not get better, they would send next day to S — for the

doctor.

The next day the Hussar was worse. His servant rode to town for a doctor. Dunya bound round his head a handkerchief soaked in vinegar, and sat with her needlework beside his bed. In the presence of the postmaster, the sick man groaned and scarcely uttered a word; but he drank two cups of coffee, and, groaning, ordered dinner. Dunya did not quit his side. He constantly asked for something to drink, and Dunya gave him a jug of lemonade prepared by herself. The sick man moistened his lips, and each time, on returning the jug, he feebly pressed Dunya's hand in token of gratitude.

About dinner time the doctor arrived. He felt the sick man's pulse, spoke to him in German, and declared in Russian that he only needed rest, and that in about a couple of days he would be able to set out on his journey. The Hussar gave him twenty-five rubles for his visit, and invited him to dinner; the doctor consented. They both ate with great appetite, drank a bottle of wine, and separated very well satisfied with each other.

Another day passed, and the Hussar felt quite himself again. He was extraordinarily gay, joked unceasingly, now with Dunya, now with the postmaster, whistled tunes, chatted with the travelers, copied their passports into the register, and the worthy postmaster took such a fancy to him that when the third day arrived, it was with regret that he parted with his amiable guest.

The day was Sunday; Dunya was preparing to go to mass. The Hussar's *kibitka* stood ready. He took leave of the postmaster, after having generously recompensed him for his board and lodging, bade farewell to Dunya, and offered to drive her as far as the church, which was situated at the edge of the village. Dunya hesitated.

"What are you afraid of?" asked her father. "His Excellency is not a wolf: he won't eat you. Drive with him as far as the church."

Dunya seated herself in the *kjbitka* by the side of the Hussar, the servant sprang upon the box, the driver whistled, and the horses started off at a gallop.

The poor postmaster could not understand how he could have allowed his Dunya to drive off with the Hussar, how he could have been so blind, and what had become of his senses at that moment. A half-hour had not elapsed, before his heart began to ache, and uneasiness took possession of him to such a degree, that he could contain himself no longer, and started off for mass himself. On reaching the church, he saw that the people were already beginning to disperse, but Dunya was neither in the churchyard nor in the porch. He hastened into the church: the priest was leaving the chancel, the sexton was blowing out the candles, two old women were still praying in a corner, but Dunya was not in the church. The poor father was scarcely able to summon up sufficient resolution to ask the sexton if she had been to mass. The sexton replied that she had not. The postmaster returned home neither alive nor dead. One hope alone remained to him: Dunya, in the thoughtlessness of youth, might have taken it into her head to

go on as far as the next station, where her godmother lived. In agonizing agitation he awaited the return of the *troika* in which he had let her set out. There was no sign of it. At last, in the evening, the driver arrived alone and intoxicated, with the terrible news: "Dunya went on with the Hussar from the next station."

The old man could not bear his misfortune: he immediately took to that very same bed where, the evening before, the young deceiver had lain. Taking all the circumstances into account, the postmaster now came to the conclusion that the illness had been a mere pretence. The poor man fell ill with a violent fever; he was removed to S — , and in his place another person was appointed for the time being. The same doctor, who had attended the Hussar, attended him also. He assured the postmaster that the young man had been perfectly well, and that at the time of his visit he had suspected him of some evil intention, but that he had kept silent through fear of his whip. Whether the German spoke the truth or only wished to boast of his perspicacity, his communication afforded no consolation to the poor invalid. Scarcely had the latter recovered from his illness, when he obtained from the postmaster of S — two months' leave of absence, and without saying a word to anybody of his intention, he set out on foot in search of his daughter.

From the traveling passport he knew that Captain Minsky was journeying from Smolensk to Saint Petersburg. The driver with whom he had gone off said that Dunya had wept the whole of the way, although she seemed to go of her own free will.

"Perhaps," thought the postmaster, "I shall bring my lost lamb home again."

With this thought he reached Saint Petersburg, stopped in the neighborhood of the Izmailovsky barracks, at the house of a retired corporal, an old comrade of his, and began his search. He soon discovered that Captain Minsky was in Saint Petersburg, and was living at De- moute's Inn. The postmaster resolved to call upon him.

Early in the morning he went to Minsky's antechamber, and requested that His Excellency might be informed that an old soldier wished to see him. The orderly, who was just then polishing a boot on a boot- tree, informed him that his master was still asleep, and that he never received anybody before eleven o'clock. The postmaster retired and returned at the appointed time. Minsky himself came out to him in his dressing- gown and red skull-cap.

"Well, brother, what do you want?" he asked. The old man's heart was wrung, tears started to his eyes, and he was only able to say in a trembling voice:

"Your Excellency!... do me the great favor!..."

Minsky glanced quickly at him, flushed, took him by the hand, led him into his study and locked the door.

"Your Excellency!" continued the old man: "what has fallen from the load is lost; give me back at least my poor Dunya. You have had your

pleasure with her; do not ruin her for nothing.”

“What is done cannot be undone,” said the young man, in the utmost confusion; “I am guilty before you, and am ready to ask your pardon, but do not think that I could forsake Dunya: she will be happy, I give you my word of honor. Why do you want her? She loves me; she has become unaccustomed to her former way of living. Neither you nor she will forget what has happened.”

Then, pushing something into the old man’s cuff, he opened the door, and the postmaster, without remembering how, found himself in the street again.

For a long time he stood motionless; at last he observed in the cuff of his sleeve a roll of papers; he drew them out and unrolled several fifty-ruble notes. Tears again filled his eyes, tears of indignation! He crushed the notes into a ball, flung them upon the ground, stamped upon them with the heel of his boot, and then walked away.... After having gone a few steps, he stopped, reflected, and returned... but the notes were no longer there. A well-dressed young man, noticing him, ran toward a *droshky*, jumped in hurriedly, and cried to the driver: “Go on!”

The postmaster did not pursue him. He resolved to return home to his station, but before doing so he wished to see his poor Dunya once more. For that purpose, he returned to Minsky’s lodgings a couple of days later, but when he came the orderly told him roughly that his master received nobody, pushed him out of the ante-chamber and slammed the door in his face. The postmaster stood waiting for a long time, then he walked away.

That same day, in the evening, he was walking along Liteinaia Street, having been to a service at the Church of Our Lady of All the Sorrowing. Suddenly a smart *droshky* flew past him, and the postmaster recognized Minsky. The *droshky* stopped in front of a three-story house, close to the entrance, and the Hussar ran up the steps. A happy thought flashed through the mind of the postmaster. He returned, and, approaching the coachman:

“Whose horse is this, my friend?” asked he: “Doesn’t it belong to Minsky?”

“Exactly so,” replied the coachman: “what do you want?”

“Well, your master ordered me to carry a letter to his Dunya, and I have forgotten where his Dunya lives.”

“She lives here, on the second floor. But you are late with your letter, my friend; he is with her himself just now.”

“That doesn’t matter,” replied the postmaster, with an indescribable emotion. “Thanks for your information. I shall do as I was told.” And with these words he ascended the staircase.

The door was locked; he rang. There was a painful delay of several seconds. The key rattled, and the door was opened.

“Does Avdotya Samsonovna live here?” he asked.

“Yes,” replied a young maidservant: “what do you want with her?”

The postmaster, without replying, walked into the room.

“You mustn’t go in, you mustn’t go in!” the servant cried out after him: “Avdotya Samsonovna has visitors.”

But the postmaster, without heeding her, walked straight on. The first two rooms were dark; in the third there was a light. He approached the open door and paused. In the room, which was beautifully furnished, sat Minsky in deep thought. Dunya, attired in the most elegant fashion, was sitting upon the arm of his chair, like a lady rider upon her English saddle. She was gazing tenderly at Minsky, and winding his black curls round her dazzling fingers. Poor postmaster! Never had his daughter seemed to him so beautiful; he admired her against his will.

“Who is there?” she asked, without raising her head.

He remained silent. Receiving no reply, Dunya raised her head... and with a cry she fell upon the carpet. The alarmed Minsky hastened to pick her up, but suddenly catching sight of the old postmaster in the doorway, he left Dunya and approached him, trembling with rage.

“What do you want?” he said to him, clenching his teeth. “Why do you steal after me everywhere, like a thief? Or do you want to murder me? Be off!” and with a powerful hand he seized the old man by the collar and pushed him out onto the stairs.

The old man returned to his lodgings. His friend advised him to lodge a complaint, but the postmaster reflected, waved his hand, and resolved to abstain from taking any further steps in the matter. Two days afterward he left Saint Petersburg and returned to his station to resume his duties.

“This is the third year,” he concluded, “that I have been living without Dunya, and I have not heard a word about her. Whether she is alive or not — God only knows. So many things happen. She is not the first, nor yet the last, that a traveling scoundrel has seduced, kept for a little while, and then abandoned. There are many such young fools in Saint Petersburg, today in satin and velvet, and tomorrow sweeping the streets along with the rift-raft of the dram-shops. Sometimes, when I think that Dunya also may come to such an end, then, in spite of myself, I sin and wish her in her grave....”

Such was the story of my friend, the old postmaster, a story more than once interrupted by tears, which he picturesquely wiped away with the skirt of his coat, like the zealous Terentyich in Dmitriyev’s beautiful ballad. These tears were partly induced by the punch, of which he had drunk five glasses during the course of his narrative, but for all that, they moved me deeply. After taking leave of him, it was a long time before I could forget the old postmaster, and for a long time I thought of poor Dunya....

Passing through the little town of X. a short time ago, I remembered my friend. I heard that the station, over which he ruled, had been done away with. To my question: “Is the old postmaster still alive?” nobody could give me a satisfactory reply. I resolved to pay a visit to the familiar place, and having hired horses, I set out for the village of N — .

It was in the autumn. Gray clouds covered the sky; a cold wind blew across the reaped fields, carrying along with it the red and yellow leaves from the trees that it encountered. I arrived in the village at sunset, and

stopped at the little post-house. In the entry (where Dunya had once kissed me) a stout woman came out to meet me, and in answer to my questions replied, that the old postmaster had been dead for about a year, that his house was occupied by a brewer, and that she was the brewer's wife. I began to regret my useless journey, and the seven rubles that I had spent in vain.

"Of what did he die?" I asked the brewer's wife.

"Of drink, sir," she replied.

"And where is he buried?"

"On the outskirts of the village, near his late wife."

"Could somebody take me to his grave?"

"To be sure! Hi, Vanka, you have played with that cat long enough. Take this gentleman to the cemetery, and show him the postmaster's grave."

At these words a ragged lad, with red hair, and blind in one eye, ran up to me and immediately began to lead the way toward the burial-ground.

"Did you know the dead man?" I asked him on the road.

"Yes, indeed! He taught me how to cut whistles. When he came out of the dram-shop (God rest his soul!) we used to run after him and call out: 'Grandfather! grandfather! some nuts!' and he used to throw nuts to us. He always used to play with us."

"And do the travelers remember him?"

"There are very few travelers now; the assessor passes this way sometimes, but he doesn't trouble himself about dead people. Last summer a lady passed through here, and she asked after the old postmaster, and went to his grave."

"What sort of a lady?" I asked with curiosity.

"A very beautiful lady," replied the lad. "She was in a carriage with six horses, and had along with her three little children, a nurse, and a little black lapdog; and when they told her that the old postmaster was dead, she began to cry, and said to the children: 'Sit still, I will go to the cemetery.' I offered to show her the way. But the lady said: 'I know the way.' And she gave me a five-copeck piece.... such a kind lady!"

We reached the cemetery, a bare place, with no fence around it, dotted with wooden crosses, which were not shaded by a single tree. Never in my life had I seen such a dismal cemetery.

"This is the old postmaster's grave," said the lad to me, leaping upon a heap of sand, in which was planted a black cross with a bronze ikon.

"And did the lady come here?" I asked.

"Yes," replied Vanka; "I watched her from a distance. She cast herself down here, and remained lying down for a long time. Then she went back to the village, sent for the priest, gave him some money and drove off, after giving me a five-copeck piece... such a kind lady!"

And I, too, gave the lad a five-copeck piece, and I no longer regretted the journey nor the seven rubles that I had spent on it.

MISTRESS INTO MAID



Translated by T. Keane

You're pretty, Dushenka, no matter what you wear.

Bogdanovich

IN one of our remote provinces was situated the estate of Ivan Petrovich Berestov. In his youth he had served in the Guards, but having quitted the service at the beginning of the year 1797, he repaired to his village, and since that time he had not stirred from it. He had been married to a penniless gentlewoman, who had died in child-bed at a time when he was absent from home on a visit to one of the outlying fields of his estate. He soon found consolation in attending to his affairs. He built a house on a plan of his own, established a textile mill, tripled his revenues, and began to consider himself the most intelligent man in the whole country roundabout, and in this he was not contradicted by his neighbors, who came to visit him with their families and their dogs. On week-days he wore a velveteen jacket, but on Sundays and holidays he appeared in a surtout of cloth that had been manufactured on his own premises. He himself kept an account of all his expenses, and he never read anything except the "Senate Bulletins."

In general he was liked, although he was considered proud. There was only one person who was not on good terms with him, and that was Grigory Ivanovich Muromsky, his nearest neighbor. This latter was a genuine Russian gentleman. After having squandered the greater part of his fortune in Moscow, and having become a widower about the same time, he retired to his last remaining estate, where he continued to indulge in habits of extravagance, but of a new kind. He laid out an English garden, on which he expended nearly the whole of his remaining revenue. His grooms were dressed like English jockeys, his daughter had an English governess, and his fields were cultivated after the English method.

But Russian corn fares ill when foreign ways are followed, and in spite of a considerable reduction in his expenses, the revenues of Grigory Ivanovich did not increase. He found means, even in the country, of contracting new debts. Nevertheless he was not considered a fool, for he was the first landowner in his province who conceived the idea of mortgaging his estate in the Tutorial Council — a proceeding which at that time was considered exceedingly complicated and venturesome. Of all those who censured him, Berestov showed himself the most severe. Hatred of all innovation was a distinguishing trait in his character. He could not bring himself to speak calmly of his neighbor's Anglomania, and he constantly found occasion to criticise him. If he showed his possessions to a guest, in reply to the praises bestowed upon him for his economical

arrangements, he would say with a sly smile:

“Yes, sir, it is not the same with me as with my neighbor Grigory Ivanovich. What need have we to ruin ourselves in the English style, when we have enough to do to keep the wolf from the door in the Russian style?”

These, and similar sarcastic remarks, thanks to the zeal of obliging neighbors, did not fail to reach the ears of Grigory Ivanovich greatly embellished. The Anglomaniac bore criticism as impatiently as our journalists. He became furious, and called his traducer a boor and a country bumpkin.

Such were the relations between the two proprietors, when Berestov's son came home. He had been educated at the University of- — ----, and intended to enter the military service, but to this his father would not give his consent. For the civil service the young man had not the slightest inclination, and as neither felt inclined to yield to the other, the young Alexey lived in the meantime like a gentleman, and at any rate allowed his mustache to grow.

Alexey was indeed a fine young fellow, and it would really have been a pity were his slender frame never to be set off to advantage by a military uniform, and were he to be compelled to spend his youth in bending over the papers of the chancery office, instead of cutting a figure on horseback. The neighbors, observing how at the hunt he always dashed ahead across the fields, agreed that he would never make a proper clerk. The young ladies cast glances at him, and sometimes could not leave off looking at him, but Alexey troubled himself very little about them, and they attributed this insensibility to some secret love affair. Indeed, there passed from hand to hand a copy of the address on one of his letters: “To Akulina Petrovna Kurochkina in Moscow, opposite the Alexeyevsky Monastery, in the house of the coppersmith Savelyev, with the request that she hand this letter to A. N. R.”

Those of my readers who have never lived in the country, cannot imagine how charming these provincial young ladies are! Brought up in the pure air, under the shadow of their own apple trees, they derive their knowledge of the world and of life from books.

Solitude, freedom, and reading develop very early within them sentiments and passions unknown to our town-bred beauties. For the young ladies of the country the sound of harness-bells is an event; a journey to the nearest town marks an epoch in their lives, and the visit of a guest leaves behind a long, and sometimes an everlasting memory. Of course everybody is at liberty to laugh at some of their peculiarities, but the jokes of a superficial observer cannot nullify their essential merits, the chief of which is that quality of character, that *individualité*, without which, in Jean Paul's opinion, there can be no human greatness. In the capitals, women receive perhaps a better education, but intercourse with the world soon smooths down the character and makes their souls as uniform as their head-dresses. This is said neither by way of judgment nor of censure, but “*nota nostra manet*,” as one of the old commentators writes.

It can easily be imagined what impression Alexey produced in the circle of our young ladies. He was the first who appeared before them gloomy and disenchanted, the first who spoke to them of lost happiness and of his blighted youth; in addition to which he wore a black ring engraved with a death's head. All this was something quite new in that province. The young ladies went mad over him.

But not one of them felt so much interest in him as the daughter of our Anglomaniac, Liza, or Betsy, as Grigory Ivanovich usually called her. As their parents did not visit each other, she had not yet seen Alexey, even when he had become the sole topic of conversation among all the young ladies of the neighborhood. She was seventeen years old. Dark eyes illuminated her swarthy and exceedingly pleasant countenance. She was an only and consequently a spoiled child. Her liveliness and continual pranks delighted her father and filled with despair the heart of Miss Jackson, her governess, an affected old maid of forty, who powdered her face and darkened her eyebrows, read through *Pamela* twice a year, for which she received two thousand rubles, and was dying of boredom in this barbarous Russia.

Liza was waited upon by Nastya, who, although somewhat older, was quite as giddy as her mistress. Liza was very fond of her, confided to her all her secrets, and planned pranks together with her; in a word, Nastya was a far more important person in the village of Priluchino, than the trusted confidante in a French tragedy.

"Will you allow me to go out to-day on a visit?" said Nastya one morning, as she was dressing her mistress.

"Certainly; but where are you going to?"

"To Tugilovo, to the Berestovs'. The wife of their cook is going to celebrate her name-day to-day, and she came over yesterday to invite us to dinner."

"Well!" said Liza: "the masters are at odds with each other, but the servants entertain each other."

"What have the masters to do with us?" replied Nastya. "Besides, I belong to you, and not to your papa. You have not had any quarrel with young Berestov; let the old ones quarrel and fight, if it gives them any pleasure."

"Try and see Alexey Berestov, Nastya, and then tell me what he looks like and what sort of a person he is."

Nastya promised to do so, and all day long Liza waited with impatience for her return. In the evening Nastya made her appearance.

"Well, Lizaveta Grigoryevna," said she, on entering the room, "I have seen young Berestov, and I had ample opportunity for taking a good look at him, for we have been together all day."

"How did that happen? Tell me about it, tell me everything just as it happened."

"Very well. We set out, I, Anisya Yegorovna, Nenila, Dunka...."

"Yes, yes, I know. And then?"

"With your leave, I will tell you everything in detail. We arrived just in time for dinner. The room was full of people. The folk from Kolbino were there, from Zakharyevo, the bailiff's wife and her daughters, the people from Khlupino...."

"Well, and Berestov?"

"Wait a moment. We sat down to table; the bailiff's wife had the place of honor. I sat next to her... the daughters sulked, but I didn't care about them...."

"Good heavens, Nastya, how tiresome you are with your never-ending details!"

"How impatient you are! Well, we rose from the table... we had been sitting down for three hours, and the dinner was excellent: pastry, blanc-mange, blue, red and striped.... Well, we left the table and went into the garden to have a game of tag, and it was then that the young master made his appearance."

"Well, and is it true that he is so very handsome?"

"Exceedingly handsome: tall, well-built, and with red cheeks...."

"Really? And I was under the impression that he was pale. Well, and how did he seem to you? Sad, thoughtful?"

"Nothing of the kind! I have never in my life seen such a madcap. He joined in our game."

"Joined in your game of tag? Impossible!"

"Not at all impossible. And what else do you think he did? He'd catch you and kiss you!"

"With your permission, Nastya, you are fibbing."

"With your permission, I am not fibbing. I had the greatest trouble in the world to get away from him. He spent the whole day with us."

"But they say that he is in love, and hasn't eyes for anybody."

"I don't know anything about that, but I know that he looked at me a good deal, and so he did at Tanya, the bailiff's daughter, and at Pasha from Kolbino, too. But it cannot be said that he misbehaved — the scamp!"

"That is extraordinary! And what do they say about him in the house?"

"They say that he is an excellent master — so kind, so cheerful. They have only one fault to find with him: he is too fond of running after the girls. But for my part, I don't think that is a very great fault: he will settle down with age."

"How I should like to see him!" said Liza, with a sigh.

"What is so difficult about it? Tugilovo is not far from us — only about three versts. Go and take a walk in that direction, or a ride on horseback, and you will assuredly meet him. He goes out early every morning with his gun."

"No, no, that would not do. He might think that I was running after him. Besides, our fathers are not on good terms, so that I cannot make his acquaintance.... Ah! Nastya, do you know what I'll do? I will dress myself up as a peasant girl!"

“Exactly! Put on a coarse blouse and a *sarafan*, and then go boldly to Tugilovo; I will answer for it that Berestov will not pass you by.”

“And I know how to speak like the peasants about here. Ah, Nastya! my dear Nastya! what an excellent idea!”

And Liza went to bed, firmly resolved on putting her plan into execution.

The next morning she began to prepare to carry out her plan. She sent to the market and bought some coarse linen, some blue nankeen and some copper buttons, and with the help of Nastya she cut out for herself a blouse and *sarafan*. She then set all the female servants to work to do the necessary sewing, so that by evening everything was ready. Liza tried on the new costume, and as she stood before the mirror, she confessed to herself that she had never looked so charming. Then she rehearsed her part. As she walked she made a low bow, and then nodded her head several times, after the manner of a clay cat, spoke in the peasants’ dialect, smiled behind her sleeve, and earned Nastya’s complete approval. One thing only proved irksome to her: she tried to walk barefooted across the courtyard, but the turf pricked her tender feet, and she found the sand and gravel unbearable. Nastya immediately came to her assistance. She took the measurement of Liza’s foot, ran to the fields to find Trofim the shepherd, and ordered him to make a pair of bast shoes to fit.

The next morning, at crack o’ dawn, Liza was already awake. Everybody in the house was still asleep. Nastya, at the gate was waiting for the shepherd. The sound of a horn was heard, and the village flock defiled past the manor-house. Trofim, as he passed Nastya, gave her a small pair of colored bast shoes, and received from her a half-ruble in exchange. Liza quietly dressed herself in the peasant’s costume, whispered her instructions to Nastya with reference to Miss Jackson, descended the back staircase and made her way through the kitchen garden into the field beyond.

The eastern sky was all aglow, and the golden rows of clouds seemed to be awaiting the sun, as courtiers await their monarch. The clear sky, the freshness of the morning, the dew, the light breeze, and the singing of the birds filled the heart of Liza with childish joy. The fear of meeting some acquaintance seemed to give her wings, for she flew rather than walked. But as she approached the grove which formed the boundary of her father’s estate, she slackened her pace. Here she resolved to wait for Alexey. Her heart beat violently, she knew not why; but is not the fear which accompanies our youthful escapades their greatest charm? Liza advanced into the depth of the grove. The muffled, undulating murmur of the branches welcomed the young girl. Her gaiety vanished. Little by little she abandoned herself to sweet reveries. She thought — but who can say exactly what a young lady of seventeen thinks of, alone in a grove, at six o’clock of a spring morning? And so she walked musingly along the pathway, which was shaded on both sides by tall trees, when suddenly a magnificent hunting dog barked at her. Liza became frightened and cried out. But at the same moment a voice called out: “*Tout beau, Sbogar, ici!*”...

and a young hunter emerged from behind a clump of bushes.

"Don't be afraid, my dear," said he to Liza: "my dog does not bite."

Liza had already recovered from her fright, and she immediately took advantage of her opportunity.

"But, sir," said she, assuming a half-frightened, half-bashful expression, "I am so afraid; he looks so fierce — he might fly at me again."

Alexey — for the reader has already recognized him — gazed fixedly at the young peasant-girl.

"I will accompany you if you are afraid," he said to her: "will you allow me to walk along with you?"

"Who is to hinder you?" replied Liza. "A free man may do as he likes, and the road is everybody's."

"Where do you come from?"

"From Priluchino; I am the daughter of Vassily the blacksmith, and I am going to gather mushrooms." (Liza carried a basket on her arm.) "And you, sir? From Tugilovo, I have no doubt."

"Exactly so," replied Alexey: "I am the young master's valet."

Alexey wanted to put himself on an equal footing with her, but Liza looked at him and laughed.

"That is a fib," said she: "I am not such a fool as you may think. I see very well that you are the young master himself."

"Why do you think so?"

"I think so for a great many reasons."

"But — "

"As if it were not possible to tell the master from the servant! You are not dressed like a servant, you do not speak like one, and you do not call your dog the way we do."

Alexey liked Liza more and more. As he was not accustomed to standing upon ceremony with pretty peasant girls, he wanted to embrace her; but Liza drew back from him, and suddenly assumed such a cold and severe look, that Alexey, although much amused, did not venture to renew the attempt.

"If you wish that we should remain good friends," said she with dignity, "be good enough not to forget yourself."

"Who taught you to be so clever?" asked Alexey, bursting into a laugh. "Can it be my friend Nastenka, the maid of your young mistress? See how enlightenment becomes diffused!"

Liza felt that she had stepped out of her rôle, and she immediately recovered herself.

"Do you think," said she, "that I have never been to the manor-house? Don't alarm yourself; I have seen and heard a great many things.... But," continued she, "if I talk to you, I shall not gather my mushrooms. Go your way, sir, and I will go mine. Pray excuse me."

And she was about to move off, but Alexey seized hold of her hand.

"What is your name, my dear?"

“Akulina,” replied Liza, endeavoring to disengage her fingers from his grasp: “but let me go, sir; it is time for me to return home.”

“Well, my friend Akulina, I will certainly pay a visit to your father, Vassily the blacksmith.”

“What do you say?” exclaimed Liza quickly: “for Heaven’s sake, don’t think of doing such a thing! If it were known at home that I had been talking to a gentleman alone in the grove, I should fare very badly — my father, Vassily the blacksmith, would beat me to death.”

“But I really must see you again.”

“Well, then, I will come here again some time to gather mushrooms.”

“When?”

“Well, tomorrow, if you wish it.”

“My dear Akulina, I would kiss you, but I dare not.... Tomorrow, then, at the same time, isn’t that so?”

“Yes, yes!”

“And you will not deceive me?”

“I will not deceive you.”

“Swear it.”

“Well, then, I swear by Holy Friday that I will come.”

The young people separated. Liza emerged from the wood, crossed the field, stole into the garden and hastened to the place where Nastya awaited her. There she changed her costume, replying absently to the questions of her impatient confidante, and then she repaired to the parlor. The cloth was laid, the breakfast was ready, and Miss Jackson, already powdered and laced up, so that she looked like a wine-glass, was cutting thin slices of bread and butter.

Her father praised her for her early walk.

“There is nothing so healthy,” said he, “as getting up at daybreak.”

Then he cited several instances of human longevity, which he had taken from the English journals, and observed that all persons who had lived to be upwards of a hundred, abstained from brandy and rose at daybreak, winter and summer.

Liza did not listen to him. In her thoughts she was going over all the circumstances of the morning’s meeting, Akulina’s whole conversation with the young hunter, and her conscience began to torment her. In vain did she try to persuade herself that their talk had not gone beyond the bounds of propriety, and that the prank would be followed by no serious consequences — her conscience spoke louder than her reason. The promise given for the following day troubled her more than anything else, and she almost felt resolved not to keep her solemn oath. But then, might not Alexey, after waiting for her in vain, make his way to the village and search out the daughter of Vassily the blacksmith, the veritable Akulina — a fat, pock-marked peasant girl — and so discover the prank she had played upon him? This thought horrified Liza, and she resolved to repair to the little wood the next morning again as Akulina.

For his part, Alexey was in an ecstasy of delight. All day long he thought of his new acquaintance; and in his dreams at night the form of the dark-skinned beauty appeared before him. The morning had scarcely begun to dawn, when he was already dressed. Without giving himself time to load his gun, he set out for the fields with his faithful Sbogar, and hastened to the place of the promised rendezvous. A half-hour of intolerable waiting passed by; at last he caught a glimpse of a blue *sarafan* between the bushes, and he rushed forward to meet his charming Akulina. She smiled at his ecstasy of gratitude, but Alexey immediately observed upon her face traces of sadness and uneasiness. He wished to know the cause. Liza confessed to him that her act seemed to her very frivolous, that she repented of it, that this time she did not wish to break her promised word, but that this meeting would be the last, and she therefore entreated him to break off an acquaintanceship which could not lead to any good.

All this, of course, was expressed in the language of a peasant; but such thoughts and sentiments, so unusual in a simple girl of the lower class, struck Alexey with astonishment. He employed all his eloquence to divert Akulina from her purpose; he assured her that his intentions were honorable, promised her that he would never give her cause to repent, that he would obey her in everything, and earnestly entreated her not to deprive him of the joy of seeing her alone, if only once a day, or even only twice a week. He spoke the language of true passion, and at that moment he was really in love. Liza listened to him in silence.

"Give me your word," said she at last, "that you will never come to the village in search of me, and that you will never seek a meeting with me except those that I shall appoint myself."

Alexey swore by Holy Friday, but she stopped him with a smile.

"I do not want you to swear," said she; "your mere word is sufficient."

After that they began to converse together in a friendly manner, strolling about the wood, until Liza said to him:

"Time is up."

They separated, and when Alexey was left alone, he could not understand how, in two meetings, a simple peasant-girl had succeeded in acquiring such real power over him. His relations with Akulina had for him all the charm of novelty, and although the injunctions of the strange peasant-girl appeared to him to be very severe, the thought of breaking his word never once entered his mind. The fact was that Alexey, in spite of his fateful ring, his mysterious correspondence and his gloomy disenchantment, was a good and impulsive young fellow, with a pure heart capable of innocent pleasure.

Were I to listen to my own wishes only, I would here enter into a minute description of the interviews of the young people, of their growing inclination toward each other, their confidences, occupations and conversations; but I know that the greater part of my readers would not share my interest. Such details are usually considered tedious and uninteresting, and therefore I will omit them, merely observing, that before

two months had elapsed, Alexey was already hopelessly in love, and Liza equally so, though less demonstrative in revealing the fact. Both were happy in the present and troubled themselves little about the future.

The thought of indissoluble ties frequently passed through their minds, but never had they spoken to each other about the matter. The reason was plain: Alexey, however much attached he might be to his lovely Akulina, could not forget the distance that separated him from the poor peasant girl; while Liza, knowing the hatred that existed between their parents, did not dare to hope for a mutual reconciliation. Moreover, her *amour propre* was stimulated in secret by the obscure and romantic hope of seeing at last the proprietor of Tugilovo at the feet of the daughter of the Priluchino blacksmith. All at once an important event occurred which threatened to alter their mutual relations.

One bright cold morning — such a morning as is very common during our Russian autumn — Ivan Petrovich Berestov went out for a ride on horseback, taking with him three pairs of hunting dogs, a groom and several peasant boys with clappers. At the same time, Grigory Ivanovich Muromsky, tempted by the beautiful weather, ordered his bob-tailed mare to be saddled, and started out to visit his Anglicized domains. On approaching the wood, he perceived his neighbor, sitting proudly on his horse, in his cloak lined with fox-skin, waiting for a hare which the boys, with loud cries and the rattling of their clappers, had started out of a thicket. If Grigory Ivanovich had foreseen this meeting, he would certainly have proceeded in another direction, but he came upon Berestov so unexpectedly, that he suddenly found himself no farther than the distance of a pistol-shot away from him. There was no help for it: Muromsky, like a civilized European, rode forward toward his adversary and politely saluted him. Berestov returned the salute with the zeal characteristic of a chained bear, who salutes the public in obedience to the order of his master.

At that moment the hare darted out of the wood and started off across the field. Berestov and the groom raised a loud shout, let the dogs loose, and then galloped off in pursuit. Muromsky's horse, not being accustomed to hunting, took fright and bolted. Muromsky, who prided himself on being a good horseman, gave it full rein, and inwardly rejoiced at the incident which delivered him from a disagreeable companion. But the horse, reaching a ravine which it had not previously noticed, suddenly sprang to one side, and Muromsky was thrown from the saddle. Striking the frozen ground with considerable force, he lay there cursing his bob-tailed mare, which, as if recovering itself, had suddenly come to a standstill as soon as it felt that it was without a rider.

Ivan Petrovich hastened toward him and inquired if he had injured himself. In the meantime the groom had secured the guilty horse, which he now led forward by the bridle. He helped Muromsky into the saddle, and Berestov invited him to his house. Muromsky could not refuse the invitation, for he felt indebted to him; and so Berestov returned home, covered with glory for having hunted down a hare and for bringing with

him his adversary wounded and almost a prisoner of war.

The two neighbors took breakfast together and conversed with each other in a very friendly manner. Muromsky requested Berestov to lend him a *droshky*, for he was obliged to confess that, owing to his bruises, he was not in a condition to return home on horseback. Berestov conducted him to the steps, and Muromsky did not take leave of him until he had obtained a promise from him that he would come the next day in company with Alexey Ivanovich, and dine in a friendly way at Priluchino. In this way was a deeply rooted enmity of long standing apparently brought to an end by the skittishness of a bob-tailed mare.

Liza ran forward to meet Grigory Ivanovich.

“What does this mean, papa?” said she with astonishment. “Why are you limping? Where is your horse? Whose *droshky* is this?”

“You will never guess, my dear,” replied Grigory Ivanovich; and then he related to her everything that had happened.

Liza could not believe her ears. Without giving her time to collect herself, Grigory Ivanovich then went on to inform her that the two Berestovs — father and son — would dine with them on the following day.

“What do you say?” she exclaimed, turning pale. “The Berestovs, father and son, will dine with us tomorrow! No, papa, you can do as you please, but I shall not show myself.”

“What! Have you taken leave of your senses?” replied her father. “Since when have you been so bashful? Or do you cherish an hereditary hatred toward him like a heroine of romance? Enough, do not be a fool.”

“No, papa, not for anything in the world, not for any treasure would I appear before the Berestovs.”

Grigory Ivanovich shrugged his shoulders, and did not dispute with her any further, for he knew that by contradiction he would obtain nothing from her, and went to rest after his eventful ride.

Lizaveta Grigoryevna repaired to her room and summoned Nastya. They both conversed together for a long time about the impending visit. What would Alexey think if, in the well-bred young lady, he recognized his Akulina? What opinion would he have of her conduct, of her manners, of her good sense? On the other hand, Liza wished very much to see what impression would be produced upon him by a meeting so unexpected.... Suddenly an idea flashed through her mind. She communicated it to Nastya; both felt delighted with it, and they resolved to carry it into effect.

The next day at breakfast, Grigory Ivanovich asked his daughter if she still intended to hide from the Berestovs.

“Papa,” replied Liza, “I will receive them if you wish it, but on one condition, and that is, that however I may appear before them, or whatever I may do, you will not be angry with me, or show the least sign of astonishment or displeasure.”

“Some new prank!” said Grigory Ivanovich, laughing. “Very well, very well, I agree; do what you like, my dark-eyed romp.”

With these words he kissed her on the forehead, and Liza ran off to put her plan into execution.

At two o'clock precisely, a carriage of domestic make, drawn by six horses, entered the courtyard and rounded the lawn. The elder Berestov mounted the steps with the assistance of two lackeys in the Muromsky livery. His son came after him on horseback, and together they entered the dining-room, where the table was already laid. Muromsky received his neighbors in the most gracious manner, proposed that they inspect his garden and menagerie before dinner, and conducted them along paths carefully kept and graveled. The elder Berestov inwardly deplored the time and labor wasted in such useless fancies, but he held his tongue out of politeness. His son shared neither the disapprobation of the economical landowner, nor the enthusiasm of the vain-glorious Anglomaniac, but waited with impatience for the appearance of his host's daughter, of whom he had heard a great deal; and although his heart, as we know, was already engaged, youthful beauty always had a claim upon his imagination.

Returning to the parlor, they all three sat down; and while the old men recalled their young days, and related anecdotes of their respective careers in the service, Alexey reflected as to what rôle he should play in the presence of Liza. He decided that an air of cold indifference would be the most becoming under the circumstances, and he prepared to act accordingly. The door opened; he turned his head with such indifference, with such haughty carelessness, that the heart of the most inveterate coquette would inevitably have quaked. Unfortunately, instead of Liza, it was old Miss Jackson, who, painted and tightly laced, entered the room with downcast eyes and with a curtsy, so that Alexey's remarkable military move was wasted. He had not succeeded in recovering from his confusion, when the door opened again, and this time it was Liza herself who entered.

All rose; her father was just beginning to introduce his guests, when suddenly he stopped short and bit his lips.... Liza, his dark-complexioned Liza, was painted white up to the ears, and was more heavily made up than even Miss Jackson herself; false curls, much lighter than her own hair, covered her head like the peruke of Louis the Fourteenth; her sleeves à *l'imbécile* stood out like the hooped skirts of Madame de Pompadour; her figure was pinched in like the letter X, and all her mother's jewels, which had not yet found their way to the pawnbroker's, shone upon her fingers, her neck and in her ears.

Alexey could not possibly recognize his Akulina in the grotesque and dazzling young lady. His father kissed her hand, and he followed his example, though much against his will; when he touched her little white fingers, it seemed to him that they trembled. In the meantime he succeeded in catching a glimpse of her little foot, intentionally advanced and set off to advantage by the most coquettish shoe imaginable. This reconciled him somewhat to the rest of her toilette. As for the paint and powder, it must be confessed that, in the simplicity of his heart, he had not noticed them at the first glance, and afterwards had no suspicion of them. Grigory Ivanovich

remembered his promise, and endeavored not to show any astonishment; but his daughter's prank seemed to him so amusing, that he could scarcely contain himself. But the person who felt no inclination to laugh was the prim English governess. She had a shrewd suspicion that the paint and powder had been extracted from her chest of drawers, and a deep flush of anger was distinctly visible beneath the artificial whiteness of her face. She darted angry glances at the young madcap, who, reserving her explanations for another time, pretended that she did not notice them.

They sat down to table. Alexey continued to play his rôle of assumed indifference and absent-mindedness. Liza put on an air of affectation, spoke in a sing-song through her teeth, and only in French. Her father kept constantly looking at her, not understanding her object, but finding it all exceedingly amusing. The English governess fumed with rage and said not a word. Ivan Petrovich alone seemed at home: he ate like two, drank heavily, laughed at his own jokes, and grew more talkative and hilarious every moment.

At last they all rose from the table; the guests took their departure, and Grigory Ivanovich gave free vent to his laughter and to his questions.

"What put the idea into your head of fooling them like that?" he said to Liza. "But do you know what? The paint suits you admirably. I do not wish to fathom the mysteries of a lady's toilette, but if I were in your place, I would very soon begin to paint; not too much, of course, but just a little."

Liza was enchanted with the success of her stratagem. She embraced her father, promised him that she would consider his advice, and then hastened to conciliate the indignant Miss Jackson, who with great reluctance consented to open the door and listen to her explanations. Liza was ashamed to appear before strangers with her dark complexion; she had not dared to ask... she felt sure that dear, good Miss Jackson would pardon her, etc., etc. Miss Jackson, feeling convinced that Liza had not wished to make her a laughing-stock by imitating her, calmed down, kissed her, and as a token of reconciliation, made her a present of a small pot of English ceruse, which Liza accepted with every appearance of sincere gratitude.

The reader will readily imagine that Liza lost no time in repairing to the rendezvous in the little wood the next morning.

"You were at our master's yesterday," she said at once to Alexey: "what do you think of our young mistress?"

Alexey replied that he had not noticed her.

"That's a pity!" replied Liza.

"Why so?" asked Alexey.

"Because I wanted to ask you if it is true what they say —

"What do they say?"

"Is it true, as they say, that I am very much like her?"

"What nonsense! She is a perfect freak compared with you."

"Oh, sir, it is very wrong of you to speak like that. Our young mistress is so fair and so stylish! How could I be compared with her!"

Alexey vowed to her that she was more beautiful than all the fair young ladies in creation, and in order to pacify her completely, he began to describe her mistress in such comical terms, that Liza laughed heartily.

"But," said she with a sigh, "even though our young mistress may be ridiculous, I am but a poor ignorant thing in comparison with her."

"Oh!" said Alexey; "is that anything to break your heart about? If you wish it, I will soon teach you to read and write."

"Yes, indeed," said Liza, "why shouldn't I try?"

"Very well, my dear; we will commence at once."

They sat down. Alexey drew from his pocket a pencil and note-book, and Akulina learnt the alphabet with astonishing rapidity. Alexey could not sufficiently admire her intelligence. The following morning she wished to try to write. At first the pencil refused to obey her, but after a few minutes she was able to trace the letters with tolerable accuracy.

"It is really wonderful!" said Alexey. "Our method certainly produces quicker results than the Lancaster system."

And indeed, at the third lesson Akulina began to spell through *Natalya the Boyar's Daughter*, interrupting her reading by observations which really filled Alexey with astonishment, and she filled a whole sheet of paper with aphorisms drawn from the same story.

A week went by, and a correspondence was established between them. Their letter-box was the hollow of an old oak-tree, and Nastya acted as their messenger. Thither Alexey carried his letters written in a bold round hand, and there he found on plain blue paper the scrawls of his beloved. Akulina perceptibly began to acquire an elegant style of expression, and her mind developed noticeably.

Meanwhile, the recently formed acquaintance between Ivan Petrovich Berestov and Grigory Ivanovich Muromsky soon became transformed into a sincere friendship, under the following circumstances. Muromsky frequently reflected that, on the death of Ivan Petrovich, all his possessions would pass into the hands of Alexey Ivanovich, in which case the latter would be one of the wealthiest landed proprietors in the province, and there would be nothing to hinder him from marrying Liza. The elder Berestov, on his side, although recognizing in his neighbor a certain extravagance (or, as he termed it, English folly), was perfectly ready to admit that he possessed many excellent qualities, as for example, his rare resourcefulness. Grigory Ivanovich was closely related to Count Pronsky, a man of distinction and of great influence. The Count could be of great service to Alexey, and Muromsky (so thought Ivan Petrovich) would doubtless rejoice to see his daughter marry so advantageously. By dint of constantly dwelling upon this idea, the two old men came at last to communicate their thoughts to one another. They embraced each other, both promised to do their best to arrange the matter, and they immediately set to work, each on his own side. Muromsky foresaw that he would have some difficulty in persuading his Betsy to become more intimately acquainted with Alexey, whom she had not seen since the memorable dinner. It seemed to him that they had not

liked each other much; at least Alexey had not paid any further visits to Priluchino, and Liza had retired to her room every time that Ivan Petrovich had honored them with a visit.

"But," thought Grigory Ivanovich, "if Alexey came to see us every day, Betsy could not help falling in love with him. That is in the nature of things. Time will settle everything."

Ivan Petrovich was less uneasy about the success of his designs. That same evening he summoned his son to his study, lit his pipe, and, after a short pause, said:

"Well, Alyosha, you have not said anything for a long time about military service. Or has the Hussar uniform lost its charm for you?"

"No, father," replied Alexey respectfully; "but I see that you do not like the idea of my entering the Hussars, and it is my duty to obey you."

"Good," replied Ivan Petrovich; "I see that you are an obedient son; that is a consolation to me.... On my side, I do not wish to compel you; I do not want to force you to enter... the civil service... at once, but, in the meanwhile, I intend you to get married."

"To whom, father?" asked Alexey in astonishment.

"To Lizaveta Grigoryevna Muromsky," replied Ivan Petrovich. "She is a fine bride, is she not?"

"Father, I have not thought of marriage yet."

"You have not thought of it, and therefore I have thought of it for you."

"As you please, but I do not care for Liza Muromsky in the least."

"You will get to like her afterwards. Love comes with time."

"I do not feel capable of making her happy."

"Do not fret about making her happy. What? Is this how you respect your father's wish? Very well!"

"As you choose. I do not wish to marry, and I will not marry."

"You will marry, or I will curse you; and as for my estate, as true as there is a God in heaven, I will sell it and squander the money, and not leave you a farthing. I will give you three days to think about the matter; and in the meantime, keep out of my sight."

Alexey knew that when his father once took an idea into his head, even a nail would not drive it out, as Taras Skotinin says in the comedy. But Alexey took after his father, and was just as head-strong as he was. He went to his room and began to reflect upon the limits of paternal authority. Then his thoughts reverted to Lizaveta Grigoryevna, to his father's solemn vow to make him a beggar, and last of all to Akulina. For the first time he saw clearly that he was passionately in love with her; the romantic idea of marrying a peasant girl and of living by the labor of his hands came into his head, and the more he thought of such a decisive step, the more reasonable did it seem to him. For some time the interviews in the wood had ceased on account of the rainy weather. He wrote Akulina a letter in the neatest handwriting, and in the wildest style, informing her of the misfortune that threatened them, and offering her his hand. He took the letter at once to the

post-office in the wood, and then went to bed, well satisfied with himself.

The next day Alexey, still firm in his resolution, rode over early in the morning to visit Muromsky, in order to explain matters frankly to him. He hoped to excite his generosity and win him over to his side.

"Is Grigory Ivanovich at home?" he asked, stopping his horse in front of the steps of the Priluchino mansion.

"No, sir," replied the servant; "Grigory Ivanovich rode out early this morning, and has not yet returned."

"How annoying!" thought Alexey.... "Is Liza- veta Grigoryevna at home, then?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

Alexey sprang from his horse, gave the reins to the lackey, and entered without being announced.

"Everything is going to be decided now," thought he, directing his steps toward the parlor: "I will explain everything to Lizaveta herself."

He entered... and then stood still as if petrified! Liza... no... Akulina, dear, dark-skinned Akulina, no longer in a *sarafan*, but in a white morning dress, was sitting in front of the window, reading his letter; she was so preoccupied that she had not heard him enter.

Alexey could not restrain an exclamation of joy. Liza started, raised her head, uttered a cry, and wished to fly from the room. But he held her back.

"Akulina! Akulina!"

Liza endeavored to free herself from his grasp.

"*Mais laissez-moi donc, Monsieur!... Mais êtes- vous fou?*" she repeated, turning away.

"Akulina! my dear Akulina!" he repeated, kissing her hands.

Miss Jackson, a witness of this scene, knew not what to think of it. At that moment the door opened, and Grigory Ivanovich entered the room.

"Aha!" said Muromsky; "it seems that you have already arranged matters between you."

The reader will spare me the unnecessary obligation of describing the denouement.

THE QUEEN OF SPADES



Translated by H. Twitchell

Pushkin's most celebrated short story, *The Queen of Spades* is the eternal tale of gambling and the avarice that plagues humanity. Pushkin wrote the story in the autumn of 1833 while staying at Boldino and the tale was first published in the literary magazine *Biblioteka dlya chteniya* in March 1834.

It tells the story of Hermann, an ethnic German, who is an officer of the engineers in the Imperial Russian army. He constantly watches the other officers gamble, but never plays himself. One night, he is intrigued to hear Tomsy tell a story about his grandmother, who was an elderly countess. Many years ago, she lost a fortune at cards and then won it back, with the secret of the three winning cards, which she learned from a notorious Count. And so Hermann becomes obsessed with obtaining the secret of the Queen of Spades...

Interestingly, the character of the Countess was inspired by Princess Natalya Petrovna Galitzine, a lady in waiting, socialite and noble and Dame of the Order of St. Catherine's first degree. The tale appears repeatedly in short story anthologies and has gone on to inspire operas by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Fromental Halévy and Franz von Suppé.



Natalya Petrovna Chernysheva (1741-1837)



Pushkin, close to the time of publication

THE QUEEN OF SPADES

AT the house of Naroumov, a cavalry officer, the long winter night had been passed in gambling. At five in the morning breakfast was served to the weary players. The winners ate with relish; the losers, on the contrary, pushed back their plates and sat brooding gloomily. Under the influence of the good wine, however, the conversation then became general.

"Well, Sourine?" said the host inquiringly.

"Oh, I lost as usual. My luck is abominable. No matter how cool I keep, I never win."

"How is it, Herman, that you never touch a card?" remarked one of the men, addressing a young officer of the Engineering Corps. "Here you are with the rest of us at five o'clock in the morning, and you have neither played nor bet all night."

"Play interests me greatly," replied the person addressed, "but I hardly care to sacrifice the necessities of life for uncertain superfluities."

"Herman is a German, therefore economical; that explains it," said Tomsy. "But the person I can't quite understand is my grandmother, the Countess Anna Fedorovna."

"Why?" inquired a chorus of voices.

"I can't understand why my grandmother never gambles."

"I don't see anything very striking in the fact that a woman of eighty refuses to gamble," objected Naroumov.

"Have you never heard her story?"

"No —"

"Well, then, listen to it. To begin with, sixty years ago my grandmother went to Paris, where she was all the fashion. People crowded each other in the streets to get a chance to see the 'Muscovite Venus,' as she was called. All the great ladies played faro, then. On one occasion, while playing with the Duke of Orleans, she lost an enormous sum. She told her husband of the debt, but he refused outright to pay it. Nothing could induce him to change his mind on the subject, and grandmother was at her wits' ends. Finally, she remembered a friend of hers, Count Saint-Germain. You must have heard of him, as many wonderful stories have been told about him. He is said to have discovered the elixir of life, the philosopher's stone, and many other equally marvelous things. He had money at his disposal, and my grandmother knew it. She sent him a note asking him to come to see her. He obeyed her summons and found her in great distress. She painted the cruelty of her husband in the darkest colors, and ended by telling the Count that she depended upon his friendship and generosity.

"'I could lend you the money,' replied the Count, after a moment of thoughtfulness, 'but I know that you would not enjoy a moment's rest until you had returned it; it would only add to your embarrassment. There is another way of freeing yourself.'"

"'But I have no money at all,' insisted my grandmother.

“‘There is no need of money. Listen to me.’

“The Count then told her a secret which any of us would give a good deal to know.”

The young gamblers were all attention. Tomsy lit his pipe, took a few whiffs, then continued:

“The next evening, grandmother appeared at Versailles at the Queen’s gaming-table. The Duke of Orleans was the dealer. Grandmother made some excuse for not having brought any money, and began to punt. She chose three cards in succession, again and again, winning every time, and was soon out of debt.”

“A fable,” remarked Herman; “perhaps the cards were marked.”

“I hardly think so,” replied Tomsy, with an air of importance.

“So you have a grandmother who knows three winning cards, and you haven’t found out the magic secret.”

“I must say I have not. She had four sons, one of them being my father, all of whom are devoted to play; she never told the secret to one of them. But my uncle told me this much, on his word of honor. Tchaplitzky, who died in poverty after having squandered millions, lost at one time, at play, nearly three hundred thousand rubles. He was desperate and grandmother took pity on him. She told him the three cards, making him swear never to use them again. He returned to the game, staked fifty thousand rubles on each card, and came out ahead, after paying his debts.”

As day was dawning the party now broke up, each one draining his glass and taking his leave.

The Countess Anna Fedorovna was seated before her mirror in her dressing-room. Three women were assisting at her toilet. The old Countess no longer made the slightest pretensions to beauty, but she still clung to all the habits of her youth, and spent as much time at her toilet as she had done sixty years before. At the window a young girl, her ward, sat at her needlework.

“Good afternoon, grandmother,” cried a young officer, who had just entered the room. “I have come to ask a favor of you.”

“What, Pavel?”

“I want to be allowed to present one of my friends to you, and to take you to the ball on Tuesday night.”

“Take me to the ball and present him to me there.”

After a few more remarks the officer walked up to the window where Lisaveta Ivanovna sat.

“Whom do you wish to present?” asked the girl.

“Naroumov; do you know him?”

“No; is he a soldier?”

“Yes.”

“An engineer?”

“No; why do you ask?”

The girl smiled and made no reply.

Pavel Tomskey took his leave, and, left to herself, Lisaveta glanced out of the window. Soon, a young officer appeared at the corner of the street; the girl blushed and bent her head low over her canvas.

This appearance of the officer had become a daily occurrence. The man was totally unknown to her, and as she was not accustomed to coquetting with the soldiers she saw on the street, she hardly knew how to explain his presence. His persistence finally roused an interest entirely strange to her. One day, she even ventured to smile upon her admirer, for such he seemed to be.

The reader need hardly be told that the officer was no other than Herman, the would-be gambler, whose imagination had been strongly excited by the story told by Tomskey of the three magic cards.

"Ah," he thought, "if the old Countess would only reveal the secret to me. Why not try to win her good-will and appeal to her sympathy?"

With this idea in mind, he took up his daily station before the house, watching the pretty face at the window, and trusting to fate to bring about the desired acquaintance.

One day, as Lisaveta was standing on the pavement about to enter the carriage after the Countess, she felt herself jostled and a note was thrust into her hand. Turning, she saw the young officer at her elbow. As quick as thought, she put the note in her glove and entered the carriage. On her return from the drive, she hastened to her chamber to read the missive, in a state of excitement mingled with fear. It was a tender and respectful declaration of affection, copied word for word from a German novel. Of this fact, Lisa was, of course, ignorant.

The young girl was much impressed by the missive, but she felt that the writer must not be encouraged. She therefore wrote a few lines of explanation and, at the first opportunity, dropped it, with the letter, out of the window. The officer hastily crossed the street, picked up the papers and entered a shop to read them.

In no wise daunted by this rebuff, he found the opportunity to send her another note in a few days. He received no reply, but, evidently understanding the female heart, he persevered, begging for an interview. He was rewarded at last by the following:

"To-night we go to the ambassador's ball. We shall remain until two o'clock. I can arrange for a meeting in this way. After our departure, the servants will probably all go out, or go to sleep. At half-past eleven enter the vestibule boldly, and if you see any one, inquire for the Countess; if not, ascend the stairs, turn to the left and go on until you come to a door, which opens into her bedchamber. Enter this room and behind a screen you will find another door leading to a corridor; from this a spiral staircase leads to my sitting-room. I shall expect to find you there on my return."

Herman trembled like a leaf as the appointed hour drew near. He obeyed instructions fully, and, as he met no one, he reached the old lady's bedchamber without difficulty. Instead of going out of the small door behind the screen, however, he concealed himself in a closet to await the

return of the old Countess.

The hours dragged slowly by; at last he heard the sound of wheels. Immediately lamps were lighted and servants began moving about. Finally the old woman tottered into the room, completely exhausted. Her women removed her wraps and proceeded to get her in readiness for the night. Herman watched the proceedings with a curiosity not unmingled with superstitious fear. When at last she was attired in cap and gown, the old woman looked less uncanny than when she wore her ball-dress of blue brocade.

She sat down in an easy chair beside a table, as she was in the habit of doing before retiring, and her women withdrew. As the old lady sat swaying to and fro, seemingly oblivious to her surroundings, Herman crept out of his hiding-place.

At the slight noise the old woman opened her eyes, and gazed at the intruder with a half-dazed expression.

"Have no fear, I beg of you," said Herman, in a calm voice. "I have not come to harm you, but to ask a favor of you instead."

The Countess looked at him in silence, seemingly without comprehending him. Herman thought she might be deaf, so he put his lips close to her ear and repeated his remark. The listener remained perfectly mute.

"You could make my fortune without its costing you anything," pleaded the young man; "only tell me the three cards which are sure to win, and —"

Herman paused as the old woman opened her lips as if about to speak.

"It was only a jest; I swear to you, it was only a jest," came from the withered lips.

"There was no jesting about it. Remember Tchaplitzky, who, thanks to you, was able to pay his debts."

An expression of interior agitation passed over the face of the old woman; then she relapsed into her former apathy.

"Will you tell me the names of the magic cards, or not?" asked Herman after a pause.

There was no reply.

The young man then drew a pistol from his pocket, exclaiming: "You old witch, I'll force you to tell me!"

At the sight of the weapon the Countess gave a second sign of life. She threw back her head and put out her hands as if to protect herself; then they dropped and she sat motionless.

Herman grasped her arm roughly, and was about to renew his threats, when he saw that she was dead!

Seated in her room, still in her ball-dress, Lisaveta gave herself up to her reflections. She had expected to find the young officer there, but she felt relieved to see that he was not.

Strangely enough, that very night at the ball, Tomsy had rallied her about her preference for the young officer, assuring her that he knew more than she supposed he did.

"Of whom are you speaking?" she had asked in alarm, fearing her adventure had been discovered.

"Of the remarkable man," was the reply. "His name is Herman."

Lisa made no reply.

"This Herman," continued Tomsy, "is a romantic character; he has the profile of a Napoleon and the heart of a Mephistopheles. It is said he has at least three crimes on his conscience. But how pale you are."

"It is only a slight headache. But why do you talk to me of this Herman?"

"Because I believe he has serious intentions concerning you."

"Where has he seen me?"

"At church, perhaps, or on the street."

The conversation was interrupted at this point, to the great regret of the young girl. The words of Tomsy made a deep impression upon her, and she realized how imprudently she had acted. She was thinking of all this and a great deal more when the door of her apartment suddenly opened, and Herman stood before her. She drew back at sight of him, trembling violently.

"Where have you been?" she asked in a frightened whisper.

"In the bedchamber of the Countess. She is dead," was the calm reply.

"My God! What are you saying?" cried the girl.

"Furthermore, I believe that I was the cause of her death."

The words of Tomsy flashed through Lisa's mind.

Herman sat down and told her all. She listened with a feeling of terror and disgust. So those passionate letters, that audacious pursuit were not the result of tenderness and love. It was money that he desired. The poor girl felt that she had in a sense been an accomplice in the death of her benefactress. She began to weep bitterly. Herman regarded her in silence.

"You are a monster!" exclaimed Lisa, drying her eyes.

"I didn't intend to kill her; the pistol was not even loaded.

"How are you going to get out of the house?" inquired Lisa. "It is nearly daylight. I intended to show you the way to a secret staircase, while the Countess was asleep, as we would have to cross her chamber. Now I am afraid to do so."

"Direct me, and I will find the way alone," replied Herman.

She gave him minute instructions and a key with which to open the street door. The young man pressed the cold, inert hand, then went out.

The death of the Countess had surprised no one, as it had long been expected. Her funeral was attended by every one of note in the vicinity. Herman mingled with the throng without attracting any especial attention. After all the friends had taken their last look at the dead face, the young man approached the bier. He prostrated himself on the cold floor, and remained motionless for a long time. He rose at last with a face almost as

pale as that of the corpse itself, and went up the steps to look into the casket. As he looked down it seemed to him that the rigid face returned his glance mockingly, closing one eye. He turned abruptly away, made a false step, and fell to the floor. He was picked up, and, at the same moment, Lisaveta was carried out in a faint.

Herman did not recover his usual composure during the entire day. He dined alone at an out-of-the-way restaurant, and drank a great deal, in the hope of stifling his emotion. The wine only served to stimulate his imagination. He returned home and threw himself down on his bed without undressing.

During the night he awoke with a start; the moon shone into his chamber, making everything plainly visible. Some one looked in at the window, then quickly disappeared. He paid no attention to this, but soon he heard the vestibule door open. He thought it was his orderly, returning late, drunk as usual. The step was an unfamiliar one, and he heard the shuffling sound of loose slippers.

The door of his room opened, and a woman in white entered. She came close to the bed, and the terrified man recognized the Countess.

"I have come to you against my will," she said abruptly; "but I was commanded to grant your request. The tray, seven, and ace in succession are the magic cards. Twenty-four hours must elapse between the use of each card, and after the three have been used you must never play again."

The phantom then turned and walked away. Herman heard the outside door close, and again saw the form pass the window.

He rose and went out into the hall, where his orderly lay asleep on the floor. The door was closed. Finding no trace of a visitor, he returned to his room, lit his candle, and wrote down what he had just heard.

Two fixed ideas cannot exist in the brain at the same time any more than two bodies can occupy the same point in space. The tray, seven, and ace soon chased away the thoughts of the dead woman, and all other thoughts from the brain of the young officer. All his ideas merged into a single one: how to turn to advantage the secret paid for so dearly. He even thought of resigning his commission and going to Paris to force a fortune from conquered fate. Chance rescued him from his embarrassment.

Tchekalinsky, a man who had passed his whole life at cards, opened a club at Saint Petersburg. His long experience secured for him the confidence of his companions, and his hospitality and genial humor conciliated society.

The gilded youth flocked around him, neglecting society, preferring the charms of faro to those of their sweethearts. Naroumov invited Herman to accompany him to the club, and the young man accepted the invitation only too willingly.

The two officers found the apartments full. Generals and statesmen played whist; young men lounged on sofas, eating ices or smoking. In the principal salon stood a long table, at which about twenty men sat playing

faro, the host of the establishment being the banker.

He was a man of about sixty, gray-haired and respectable. His ruddy face shone with genial humor; his eyes sparkled and a constant smile hovered around his lips.

Naroumov presented Herman. The host gave him a cordial handshake, begged him not to stand upon ceremony, and returned, to his dealing. More than thirty cards were already on the table. Tchekalinsky paused after each coup, to allow the punters time to recognize their gains or losses, politely answering all questions and constantly smiling.

After the deal was over, the cards were shuffled and the game began again.

"Permit me to choose a card," said Herman, stretching out his hand over the head of a portly gentleman, to reach a livret. The banker bowed without replying.

Herman chose a card, and wrote the amount of his stake upon it with a piece of chalk.

"How much is that?" asked the banker; "excuse me, sir, but I do not see well."

"Forty thousand rubles," said Herman coolly.

All eyes were instantly turned upon the speaker.

"He has lost his wits," thought Naroumov.

"Allow me to observe," said Tchekalinsky, with his eternal smile, "that your stake is excessive."

"What of it?" replied Herman, nettled. "Do you accept it or not?"

The banker nodded in assent. "I have only to remind you that the cash will be necessary; of course your word is good, but in order to keep the confidence of my patrons, I prefer the ready money."

Herman took a bank-check from his pocket and handed it to his host. The latter examined it attentively, then laid it on the card chosen.

He began dealing: to the right, a nine; to the left, a tray.

"The tray wins," said Herman, showing the card he held — a tray.

A murmur ran through the crowd. Tchekalinsky frowned for a second only, then his smile returned. He took a roll of bank-bills from his pocket and counted out the required sum. Herman received it and at once left the table.

The next evening saw him at the place again. Every one eyed him curiously, and Tchekalinsky greeted him cordially.

He selected his card and placed upon it his fresh stake. The banker began dealing: to the right, a nine; to the left, a seven.

Herman then showed his card — a seven spot. The onlookers exclaimed, and the host was visibly disturbed. He counted out ninety-four-thousand rubles and passed them to Herman, who accepted them without showing the least surprise, and at once withdrew.

The following evening he went again. His appearance was the signal for the cessation of all occupation, every one being eager to watch the developments of events. He selected his card — an ace.

The dealing began: to the right, a queen; to the left, an ace.

"The ace wins," remarked Herman, turning up his card without glancing at it.

"Your queen is killed," remarked Tchekalinsky quietly.

Herman trembled; looking down, he saw, not the ace he had selected, but the queen of spades. He could scarcely believe his eyes. It seemed impossible that he could have made such a mistake. As he stared at the card it seemed to him that the queen winked one eye at him mockingly.

"The old woman!" he exclaimed involuntarily.

The croupier raked in the money while he looked on in stupid terror. When he left the table, all made way for him to pass; the cards were shuffled, and the gambling went on.

Herman became a lunatic. He was confined at the hospital at Oboukov, where he spoke to no one, but kept constantly murmuring in a monotonous tone: "The tray, seven, ace! The tray, seven, queen!"

KIRDJALI



Translated by T. Keane

KIRDJALI was by birth a Bulgarian. Kirdjali, in the Turkish language, signifies a knight, a daredevil. His real name I do not know.

Kirdjali with his brigandage brought terror upon the whole of Moldavia. In order to give some idea of him, I will relate one of his exploits. One night he and the Arnaut Michaelaki fell together upon a Bulgarian village. They set it on fire at both ends, and began to go from hut to hut. Kirdjali cut throats, and Michaelaki carried off the booty. Both shouted: "Kirdjali! Kirdjali!" The whole village took to flight.

When Alexander Ypsilanti proclaimed the revolt and began to collect his army, Kirdjali brought him several of his old companions. The real object of the Hetaeria was but ill understood by them, but war presented an opportunity for getting rich at the expense of the Turks, and perhaps of the Moldavians, and that was plain to them.

Alexander Ypsilanti was personally brave, but he did not possess the qualities necessary for the rôle which he had assumed with such ardor and such want of caution. He did not know how to manage the people whom he was obliged to lead. They had neither respect for him nor confidence in him. After the un-

happy battle, in which the flower of Greek youth perished, Iordaki Olimbioti persuaded him to retire, and he himself took his place. Ypsilanti escaped to the borders of Austria, and thence sent his curses to the men whom he called traitors, cowards and scoundrels. These cowards and scoundrels for the most part perished within the walls of the monastery of Seko, or on the banks of the Pruth, desperately defending themselves against an enemy outnumbering them ten to one.

Kirdjali found himself in the detachment of George Kantakuzin, of whom might be repeated exactly what has been said of Ypsilanti. On the eve of the battle of Skulyani, Kantakuzin asked permission of the Russian authorities to enter our territory. The detachment remained without a leader, but Kirdjali, Saphianos, Kantagoni, and others stood in no need whatever of a leader.

The battle of Skulyani does not seem to have been described by anybody in all its affecting reality. Imagine seven hundred men — Arnauts, Albanians, Greeks, Bulgarians and every kind of riff-raff — with no idea of military art, retreating in sight of fifteen thousand Turkish cavalry. This detachment hugged the bank of the Pruth, and placed in front of themselves two small cannon, which they had found at Jassy, in the courtyard of the Governor, and from which salutes used to be fired during name-day feasts. The Turks would have been glad to use grape-shot, but they dared not

without the permission of the Russian authorities: the shots would infallibly have flown over to our shore. The commander of our quarantine station (now deceased), although he had served forty years in the army, had never in his life heard the whistle of a bullet, but Heaven ordained that he should hear it then. Several of them whizzed past his ears. The old man became terribly angry, and abused the major of the Okhotsky infantry regiment, which was attached to the station. The major, not knowing what to do, ran to the river, beyond which Turkish cavalymen were displaying their prowess, and threatened them with his finger. Seeing this, they turned round and galloped off, with the whole Turkish detachment after them. The major, who had threatened them with his finger, was called Khorchevsky. I do not know what became of him.

The next day, however, the Turks attacked the Hetaerists. Not daring to use grapeshot or cannon-balls, they resolved, contrary to their usual custom, to employ cold steel. The battle was fierce. Men slashed each other with yataghans. The Turks used lances, which they had not employed till then; these lances were Russian: Nekrassovists fought in their ranks. The Hetaerists, by permission of our Emperor, were allowed to cross the Pruth and take refuge in our quarantine station. They began to cross over. Kantagoni and Saphianos remained upon the Turkish bank. Kirdjali, wounded the evening before, was already within our territory. Saphianos was killed. Kantagoni, a very stout man, was wounded in the stomach by a lance. With one hand he raised his sword, with the other he seized the hostile lance, thrust it further into himself, and in that manner was able to reach his murderer with his sword, when both fell together.

All was over. The Turks remained victorious. Moldavia was swept clear of insurrectionary bands. About six hundred Arnauts were scattered over Bessarabia; if they did not know how to support themselves, they were yet grateful to Russia for her protection. They led an idle life, but not a dissipated one. They could always be seen in the coffee-houses of half-Turkish Bessarabia, with long pipes in their mouths, sipping coffee grounds out of small cups. Their figured jackets and red pointed slippers were already beginning to wear out, but their tufted skull-caps were still worn on the side of the head, and yataghans and pistols still protruded from their broad sashes. Nobody complained of them. It was impossible to imagine that these poor, peaceably disposed men were the notorious klephts of Moldavia, the companions of the ferocious Kirdjali, and that he himself was among them.

The pasha in command at Jassy became informed of this, and, in virtue of treaty stipulations, requested the Russian authorities to extradite the brigand.

The police instituted a search. They discovered that Kirdjali was really in Kishinev. They captured him in the house of a fugitive monk in the evening, when he was having supper, sitting in the dark with seven companions.

Kirdjali was placed under arrest. He did not try to conceal the truth; he acknowledged that he was Kirdjali.

"But," he added, "since I crossed the Pruth, I have not taken so much as a pin, or imposed upon even the lowest gypsy. To the Turks, to the Moldavians and to the Wallachians I am undoubtedly a brigand, but to the Russians I am a guest. When Saphianos, having fired off all his grape-shot, came here, collecting from the wounded, for the last shots, buttons, nails, watch- chains and the knobs of yataghans, I gave him twenty *beshliks*, and was left without money. God knows that I, Kirdjali, have been living on charity. Why then do the Russians now deliver me into the hands of my enemies?"

After that, Kirdjali was silent, and tranquilly awaited the decision that was to determine his fate. He did not wait long. The authorities, not being bound to look upon brigands from their romantic side, and being convinced of the justice of the demand, ordered Kirdjali to be sent to Jassy.

A man of heart and intellect, at that time a young and unknown official, who is now occupying an important post, vividly described to me his departure.

At the gate of the prison stood a *caruta*.... Perhaps you do not know what a *caruta* is. It is a low, wicker vehicle, to which, not very long since, there were generally harnessed six or eight sorry jades. A Moldavian, with a mustache and a sheepskin cap, sitting astride one of them, incessantly shouted and cracked his whip, and his wretched animals ran on at a fairly sharp trot. If one of them began to slacken its pace, he unharnessed it with terrible oaths and left it upon the road, little caring what might be its fate. On the return journey he was sure to find it in the same place, quietly grazing upon the green steppe. It not unfrequently happened that a traveler, starting from one station with eight horses, arrived at the next with a pair only. It used to be so about fifteen years ago. Nowadays in Russianized Bessarabia they have adopted Russian harness and the Russian *telega*.

Such a *caruta* stood at the gate of the prison in the year 1821, toward the end of the month of September. Jewesses who wore drooping sleeves and loose slippers, Arnauts in their ragged and picturesque attire, well-proportioned Moldavian women with black-eyed children in their arms, surrounded the *caruta*. The men preserved silence; the women were eagerly expecting something.

The gate opened, and several police officers stepped out into the street; behind them came two soldiers leading the fettered Kirdjali.

He seemed about thirty years of age. The features of his swarthy face were regular and harsh. He was tall, broad-shouldered, and seemed endowed with unusual physical strength. A variegated turban covered the side of his head, and a broad sash encircled his slender waist. A dolman of thick, dark-blue cloth, a shirt, its broad folds falling below the knee, and handsome slippers composed the remainder of his costume. His look was proud and calm....

One of the officials, a red-faced old man in a faded uniform, on which dangled three buttons, pinched with a pair of pewter spectacles the purple knob that served him for a nose, unfolded a paper, and began to read nasally in the Moldavian tongue. From time to time he glanced haughtily at the fettered Kirdjali, to whom apparently the paper referred. Kirdjali listened to him attentively. The official finished his reading, folded up the paper and shouted sternly at the people, ordering them to make way and the *caruta* to be driven up. Then Kirdjali turned to him and said a few words to him in Moldavian; his voice trembled, his countenance changed, he burst into tears and fell at the feet of the police official, clanking his fetters. The police official, terrified, started back; the soldiers were about to raise Kirdjali, but he rose up himself, gathered up his chains, stepped into the *caruta* and cried: "Drive on!" A gendarme took a seat beside him, the Moldavian cracked his whip, and the *caruta* rolled away.

"What did Kirdjali say to you?" asked the young official of the police officer.

"He asked me," replied the police officer, smiling, "to look after his wife and child, who live not far from Kilia, in a Bulgarian village: he is afraid that they may suffer through him. Foolish fellow!"

The young official's story affected me deeply. I was sorry for poor Kirdjali. For a long time I knew nothing of his fate. Some years later I met the young official. We began to talk about the past.

"What about your friend Kirdjali?" I asked. "Do you know what became of him?"

"To be sure I do," he replied, and related to me the following.

Kirdjali, having been brought to Jassy, was taken before the Pasha, who condemned him to be impaled. The execution was deferred till some holiday. In the meantime he was confined in jail.

The prisoner was guarded by seven Turks (simple people, and at heart as much brigands as Kirdjali himself); they respected him and, like all Orientals, listened with avidity to his strange stories.

Between the guards and the prisoner an intimate acquaintance sprang up. One day Kirdjali said to them: "Brothers! my hour is near. Nobody can escape his fate. I shall soon part from you. I should like to leave you something in remembrance of me."

The Turks pricked up their ears.

"Brothers," continued Kirdjali, "three years ago, when I was engaged in plundering along with the late Milchaelaki, we buried on the steppes, not far from Jassy, a kettle filled with coins. Evidently, neither I nor he will make use of the hoard. Be it so; take it for yourselves and divide it in a friendly manner."

The Turks almost took leave of their senses. The question was, how were they to find the precious spot? They thought and thought and resolved that Kirdjali himself should conduct them to the place.

Night came on. The Turks removed the irons from the feet of the prisoner, tied his hands with a rope, and, leaving the town, set out with him

for the steppe.

Kirdjali led them, walking steadily in one direction from mound to mound. They walked on for a long time. At last Kirdjali stopped near a broad stone, measured twelve paces toward the south, stamped and said: "Here."

The Turks began to make their arrangements. Four of them took out their yataghans and commenced digging. Three remained on guard. Kirdjali sat down on the stone and watched them at their work.

"Well, how much longer are you going to be?" he asked; "haven't you come to it?"

"Not yet," replied the Turks, and they worked away with such ardor, that the perspiration rolled from them in great drops.

Kirdjali began to show signs of impatience.

"What people!" he exclaimed: "they do not even know how to dig decently. I should have finished the whole business in a couple of minutes. Children! untie my hands and give me a yataghan."

The Turks reflected and began to take counsel together. "What harm would there be?" reasoned they. "Let us untie his hands and give him a yataghan. He is only one, we are seven."

And the Turks untied his hands and gave him a yataghan.

At last Kirdjali was free and armed. What must he have felt at that moment!... He began digging quickly, the guards helping him.... Suddenly he plunged his yataghan into one of them, and, leaving the blade in his breast, he snatched from his belt a couple of pistols.

The remaining six, seeing Kirdjali armed with two pistols, ran off.

Kirdjali is now operating near Jassy. Not long ago he wrote to the Governor, demanding from him five thousand leus, and threatening, should the money not be forthcoming, to set fire to Jassy and to get at the Governor himself. The five thousand were delivered to him!

Such is Kirdjali!

THE CAPTAIN'S DAUGHTER



Translated by Milne Home

This historical novella was first published in 1836 in the fourth issue of the literary journal *Sovremennik*. It is a romanticised account of Pugachev's Rebellion in 1773-1774, which was the principal revolt in a series of popular rebellions that took place in Russia after Catherine II seized power in 1762. It began as an organised insurrection of Yaik Cossacks headed by Yemelyan Pugachev, a disaffected ex-lieutenant of the Russian Imperial army, against a background of profound peasant unrest and war with the Ottoman Empire.

The narrative introduces Pyotr Andreyich Grinyov as the only surviving child of a retired army officer. When Pyotr turns 17, his father sends him into military service in Orenburg. En route Pyotr gets lost in a blizzard, but is rescued by a mysterious man. As a token of his gratitude, Pyotr gives the guide his hareskin jacket.

КАПИТАНСКАЯ ДОЧКА.

Берете честь съ молодцу.

Писемница.

ГЛАВА I.

СЕРЖАНТЪ ГВАРДИИ.

Былъ бы гварди оны заторъ изъ капиталъ.

—Тотъ же подобенъ преть въ армию возмужать.

Мирально охотилъ! Пускай ото возмужать

.

Да кто это охоты?

Жалованья.

Отеца зной, Андрей Петровичъ Гриневъ, въ молодости своей служилъ при графѣ Мышкинѣ, и вышелъ въ отставку премьеръ-майоромъ въ 17... году. Съ тѣхъ поръ жила оны въ своей Симбирской деревнѣ, гдѣ и женился на дѣвкѣ Аграфѣ Василь-

The first page of the novella's serialisation

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Yemelyan Ivanovich Pugachov (1742-1775)

CHAPTER I.

SERGEANT OF THE GUARDS.

My father, Andréj Petróvitch Grineff, after serving in his youth under Count Münich, had retired in 17 — with the rank of senior major. Since that time he had always lived on his estate in the district of Simbirsk, where he married Avdotia, the eldest daughter of a poor gentleman in the neighbourhood. Of the nine children born of this union I alone survived; all my brothers and sisters died young. I had been enrolled as sergeant in the Séménofsky regiment by favour of the major of the Guard, Prince Banojik, our near relation. I was supposed to be away on leave till my education was finished. At that time we were brought up in another manner than is usual now.

From five years old I was given over to the care of the huntsman, Savéliitch, who from his steadiness and sobriety was considered worthy of becoming my attendant. Thanks to his care, at twelve years old I could read and write, and was considered a good judge of the points of a greyhound. At this time, to complete my education, my father hired a Frenchman, M. Beaupré, who was imported from Moscow at the same time as the annual provision of wine and Provence oil. His arrival displeased Savéliitch very much.

“It seems to me, thank heaven,” murmured he, “the child was washed, combed, and fed. What was the good of spending money and hiring a ‘*moussié*,’ as if there were not enough servants in the house?”

Beaupré, in his native country, had been a hairdresser, then a soldier in Prussia, and then had come to Russia to be “*outchitel*,” without very well knowing the meaning of this word. He was a good creature, but wonderfully absent and hare-brained. His greatest weakness was a love of the fair sex. Neither, as he said himself, was he averse to the bottle, that is, as we say in Russia, that his passion was drink. But, as in our house the wine only appeared at table, and then only in *liqueur* glasses, and as on these occasions it somehow never came to the turn of the “*outchitel*” to be served at all, my Beaupré soon accustomed himself to the Russian brandy, and ended by even preferring it to all the wines of his native country as much better for the stomach. We became great friends, and though, according to the contract, he had engaged himself to teach me *French, German, and all the sciences*, he liked better learning of me to chatter Russian indifferently. Each of us busied himself with our own affairs; our friendship was firm, and I did not wish for a better mentor. But Fate soon parted us, and it was through an event which I am going to relate.

The washerwoman, Polashka, a fat girl, pitted with small-pox, and the one-eyed cow-girl, Akoulka, came one fine day to my mother with such stories against the “*moussié*,” that she, who did not at all like these kind of jokes, in her turn complained to my father, who, a man of hasty

temperament, instantly sent for that *rascal of a Frenchman*. He was answered humbly that the “*moussié*” was giving me a lesson. My father ran to my room. Beaupré was sleeping on his bed the sleep of the just. As for me, I was absorbed in a deeply interesting occupation. A map had been procured for me from Moscow, which hung against the wall without ever being used, and which had been tempting me for a long time from the size and strength of its paper. I had at last resolved to make a kite of it, and, taking advantage of Beaupré’s slumbers, I had set to work.

My father came in just at the very moment when I was tying a tail to the Cape of Good Hope.

At the sight of my geographical studies he boxed my ears sharply, sprang forward to Beaupré’s bed, and, awaking him without any consideration, he began to assail him with reproaches. In his trouble and confusion Beaupré vainly strove to rise; the poor “*outchitel*” was dead drunk. My father pulled him up by the collar of his coat, kicked him out of the room, and dismissed him the same day, to the inexpressible joy of Savéliitch.

Thus was my education finished.

I lived like a stay-at-home son (*nédoross’l*), amusing myself by scaring the pigeons on the roofs, and playing leapfrog with the lads of the courtyard, till I was past the age of sixteen. But at this age my life underwent a great change.

One autumn day, my mother was making honey jam in her parlour, while, licking my lips, I was watching the operations, and occasionally tasting the boiling liquid. My father, seated by the window, had just opened the *Court Almanack*, which he received every year. He was very fond of this book; he never read it except with great attention, and it had the power of upsetting his temper very much. My mother, who knew all his whims and habits by heart, generally tried to keep the unlucky book hidden, so that sometimes whole months passed without the *Court Almanack* falling beneath his eye. On the other hand, when he did chance to find it, he never left it for hours together. He was now reading it, frequently shrugging his shoulders, and muttering, half aloud —

“General! He was sergeant in my company. Knight of the Orders of Russia!

Was it so long ago that we — ”

At last my father threw the *Almanack* away from him on the sofa, and remained deep in a brown study, which never betokened anything good.

“Avdotia Vassiliéva,” said he, sharply addressing my mother, “how old is Petróusha?”

“His seventeenth year has just begun,” replied my mother. “Petróusha was born the same year our Aunt Anastasia Garasimofna lost an eye, and that — ”

“All right,” resumed my father; “it is time he should serve. ‘Tis time he should cease running in and out of the maids’ rooms and climbing into the dovecote.”

The thought of a coming separation made such an impression on my mother that she dropped her spoon into her saucepan, and her eyes filled with tears. As for me, it is difficult to express the joy which took possession of me. The idea of service was mingled in my mind with the liberty and pleasures offered by the town of Petersburg. I already saw myself officer of the Guard, which was, in my opinion, the height of human happiness.

My father neither liked to change his plans, nor to defer the execution of them. The day of my departure was at once fixed. The evening before my father told me that he was going to give me a letter for my future superior officer, and bid me bring him pen and paper.

“Don’t forget, Andréj Petróvitch,” said my mother, “to remember me to Prince Banojik; tell him I hope he will do all he can for my Petróusha.”

“What nonsense!” cried my father, frowning. “Why do you wish me to write to Prince Banojik?”

“But you have just told us you are good enough to write to Petróusha’s superior officer.”

“Well, what of that?”

“But Prince Banojik is Petróusha’s superior officer. You know very well he is on the roll of the Séménofsky regiment.”

“On the roll! What is it to me whether he be on the roll or no? Petróusha shall not go to Petersburg! What would he learn there? To spend money and commit follies. No, he shall serve with the army, he shall smell powder, he shall become a soldier and not an idler of the Guard, he shall wear out the straps of his knapsack. Where is his commission? Give it to me.”

My mother went to find my commission, which she kept in a box with my christening clothes, and gave it to my father with, a trembling hand. My father read it with attention, laid it before him on the table, and began his letter.

Curiosity pricked me.

“Where shall I be sent,” thought I, “if not to Petersburg?”

I never took my eyes off my father’s pen as it travelled slowly over the paper. At last he finished his letter, put it with my commission into the same cover, took off his spectacles, called me, and said —

“This letter is addressed to Andréj Karlovitch R., my old friend and comrade. You are to go to Orenburg to serve under him.”

All my brilliant expectations and high hopes vanished. Instead of the gay and lively life of Petersburg, I was doomed to a dull life in a far and wild country. Military service, which a moment before I thought would be delightful, now seemed horrible to me. But there was nothing for it but resignation. On the morning of the following day a travelling *kibitka* stood before the hall door. There were packed in it a trunk and a box containing a tea service, and some napkins tied up full of rolls and little cakes, the last I should get of home pampering.

My parents gave me their blessing, and my father said to me —

“Good-bye, Petr’; serve faithfully he to whom you have sworn fidelity; obey your superiors; do not seek for favours; do not struggle after active

service, but do not refuse it either, and remember the proverb, 'Take care of your coat while it is new, and of your honour while it is young.'"

My mother tearfully begged me not to neglect my health, and bade Savéliitch take great care of the darling. I was dressed in a short "*touloup*" of hareskin, and over it a thick pelisse of foxskin. I seated myself in the *kibitka* with Savéliitch, and started for my destination, crying bitterly.

I arrived at Simbirsk during the night, where I was to stay twenty-four hours, that Savéliitch might do sundry commissions entrusted to him. I remained at an inn, while Savéliitch went out to get what he wanted. Tired of looking out at the windows upon a dirty lane, I began wandering about the rooms of the inn. I went into the billiard room. I found there a tall gentleman, about forty years of age, with long, black moustachios, in a dressing-gown, a cue in his hand, and a pipe in his mouth. He was playing with the marker, who was to have a glass of brandy if he won, and, if he lost, was to crawl under the table on all fours. I stayed to watch them; the longer their games lasted, the more frequent became the all-fours performance, till at last the marker remained entirely under the table. The gentleman addressed to him some strong remarks, as a funeral sermon, and proposed that I should play a game with him. I replied that I did not know how to play billiards. Probably it seemed to him very odd. He looked at me with a sort of pity. Nevertheless, he continued talking to me. I learnt that his name was Iván Ivánovitch Zourine, that he commanded a troop in the ———th Hussars, that he was recruiting just now at Simbirsk, and that he had established himself at the same inn as myself. Zourine asked me to lunch with him, soldier fashion, and, as we say, on what Heaven provides. I accepted with pleasure; we sat down to table; Zourine drank a great deal, and pressed me to drink, telling me I must get accustomed to the service. He told good stories, which made me roar with laughter, and we got up from table the best of friends. Then he proposed to teach me billiards.

"It is," said he, "a necessity for soldiers like us. Suppose, for instance, you come to a little town; what are you to do? One cannot always find a Jew to afford one sport. In short, you must go to the inn and play billiards, and to play you must know how to play."

These reasons completely convinced me, and with great ardour I began taking my lesson. Zourine encouraged me loudly; he was surprised at my rapid progress, and after a few lessons he proposed that we should play for money, were it only for a "*groch*" (two kopeks), not for the profit, but that we might not play for nothing, which, according to him, was a very bad habit.

I agreed to this, and Zourine called for punch; then he advised me to taste it, always repeating that I must get accustomed to the service.

"And what," said he, "would the service be without punch?"

I followed his advice. We continued playing, and the more I sipped my glass, the bolder I became. My balls flew beyond the cushions. I got angry; I was impertinent to the marker who scored for us. I raised the stake; in short, I behaved like a little boy just set free from school. Thus the time

passed very quickly. At last Zourine glanced at the clock, put down his cue, and told me I had lost a hundred roubles. This disconcerted me very much; my money was in the hands of Savéliitch. I was beginning to mumble excuses, when Zourine said —

“But don’t trouble yourself; I can wait, and now let us go to Arinúshka’s.”

What could you expect? I finished my day as foolishly as I had begun it. We supped with this Arinúshka. Zourine always filled up my glass, repeating that I must get accustomed to the service.

Upon leaving the table I could scarcely stand. At midnight Zourine took me back to the inn.

Savéliitch came to meet us at the door.

“What has befallen you?” he said to me in a melancholy voice, when he saw the undoubted signs of my zeal for the service. “Where did you thus swill yourself? Oh! good heavens! such a misfortune never happened before.”

“Hold your tongue, old owl,” I replied, stammering; “I am sure you are drunk. Go to bed, ... but first help me to bed.”

The next day I awoke with a bad headache. I only remembered confusedly the occurrences of the past evening. My meditations were broken by Savéliitch, who came into my room with a cup of tea.

“You begin early making free, Petr’ Andréjitch,” he said to me, shaking his head. “Well, where do you get it from? It seems to me that neither your father nor your grandfather were drunkards. We needn’t talk of your mother; she has never touched a drop of anything since she was born, except ‘*kvass*.’ So whose fault is it? Whose but the confounded ‘*moussié*?’ he taught you fine things, that son of a dog, and well worth the trouble of taking a Pagan for your servant, as if our master had not had enough servants of his own!”

I was ashamed. I turned round and said to him —

“Go away, Savéliitch; I don’t want any tea.”

But it was impossible to quiet Savéliitch when once he had begun to sermonize.

“Do you see now, Petr’ Andréjitch,” said he, “what it is to commit follies? You have a headache; you won’t take anything. A man who gets drunk is good for nothing. Do take a little pickled cucumber with honey or half a glass of brandy to sober you. What do you think?”

At this moment a little boy came in, who brought me a note from Zourine.

I unfolded it and read as follows: —

“DEAR PETR’ ANDRÉJITCH,

“Oblige me by sending by bearer the hundred roubles you lost to me yesterday. I want money dreadfully.

“Your devoted

“IVÁN ZOURINE.”

There was nothing for it. I assumed a look of indifference, and, addressing myself to Savéliitch, I bid him hand over a hundred roubles to the little boy.

“What — why?” he asked me in great surprise.

“I owe them to him,” I answered as coldly as possible.

“You owe them to him!” retorted Savéliitch, whose surprise became greater. “When had you the time to run up such a debt? It is impossible. Do what you please, excellency, but I will not give this money.”

I then considered that, if in this decisive moment I did not oblige this obstinate old man to obey me, it would be difficult for me in future to free myself from his tutelage. Glancing at him haughtily, I said to him —

“I am your master; you are my servant. The money is mine; I lost it because I chose to lose it. I advise you not to be headstrong, and to obey your orders.”

My words made such an impression on Savéliitch that he clasped his hands and remained dumb and motionless.

“What are you standing there for like a stock?” I exclaimed, angrily.

Savéliitch began to weep.

“Oh! my father, Petr’ Andréjitch,” sobbed he, in a trembling voice; “do not make me die of sorrow. Oh! my light, hearken to me who am old; write to this robber that you were only joking, that we never had so much money. A hundred roubles! Good heavens! Tell him your parents have strictly forbidden you to play for anything but nuts.”

“Will you hold your tongue?” said I, hastily, interrupting him. “Hand over the money, or I will kick you out of the place.”

Savéliitch looked at me with a deep expression of sorrow, and went to fetch my money. I was sorry for the poor old man, but I wished to assert myself, and prove that I was not a child. Zourine got his hundred roubles.

Savéliitch was in haste to get me away from this unlucky inn; he came in telling me the horses were harnessed. I left Simbirsk with an uneasy conscience, and with some silent remorse, without taking leave of my instructor, whom I little thought I should ever see again.

CHAPTER II.

THE GUIDE.

My reflections during the journey were not very pleasant. According to the value of money at that time, my loss was of some importance. I could not but confess to myself that my conduct at the Simbirsk Inn had been most foolish, and I felt guilty toward Savéliitch. All this worried me. The old man sat, in sulky silence, in the forepart of the sledge, with his face averted, every now and then giving a cross little cough. I had firmly resolved to make peace with him, but I did not know how to begin. At last I said to him —

“Look here, Savéliitch, let us have done with all this; let us make peace.”

“Oh! my little father, Petr’ Andréjitch,” he replied, with a deep sigh, “I am angry with myself; it is I who am to blame for everything. What possessed me to leave you alone in the inn? But what could I do; the devil would have it so, else why did it occur to me to go and see my gossip the deacon’s wife, and thus it happened, as the proverb says, ‘I left the house and was taken to prison.’ What ill-luck! What ill-luck! How shall I appear again before my master and mistress? What will they say when they hear that their child is a drunkard and a gamester?”

To comfort poor Savéliitch, I gave him my word of honour that in future I would not spend a single kopek without his consent. Gradually he calmed down, though he still grumbled from time to time, shaking his head —

“A hundred roubles, it is easy to talk!”

I was approaching my destination. Around me stretched a wild and dreary desert, intersected by little hills and deep ravines. All was covered with snow. The sun was setting. My *kibitka* was following the narrow road, or rather the track, left by the sledges of the peasants. All at once my driver looked round, and addressing himself to me —

“Sir,” said he, taking off his cap, “will you not order me to turn back?”

“Why?”

“The weather is uncertain. There is already a little wind. Do you not see how it is blowing about the surface snow.”

“Well, what does that matter?”

“And do you see what there is yonder?”

The driver pointed east with his whip.

“I see nothing more than the white steppe and the clear sky.”

“There, there; look, that little cloud!”

I did, in fact, perceive on the horizon a little white cloud which I had at first taken for a distant hill. My driver explained to me that this little cloud portended a “*bourane*.” I had heard of the snowstorms peculiar to these regions, and I knew of whole caravans having been sometimes buried in the tremendous drifts of snow. Savéliitch was of the same opinion as the driver,

and advised me to turn back, but the wind did not seem to me very violent, and hoping to reach in time the next posting station, I bid him try and get on quickly. He put his horses to a gallop, continually looking, however, towards the east. But the wind increased in force, the little cloud rose rapidly, became larger and thicker, at last covering the whole sky. The snow began to fall lightly at first, but soon in large flakes. The wind whistled and howled; in a moment the grey sky was lost in the whirlwind of snow which the wind raised from the earth, hiding everything around us.

"How unlucky we are, excellency," cried the driver; "it is the *bourane*."

I put my head out of the *kibitka*; all was darkness and confusion. The wind blew with such ferocity that it was difficult not to think it an animated being.

The snow drifted round and covered us. The horses went at a walk, and soon stopped altogether.

"Why don't you go on?" I said, impatiently, to the driver.

"But where to?" he replied, getting out of the sledge. "Heaven only knows where we are now. There is no longer any road, and it is all dark."

I began to scold him, but Savéliitch took his part.

"Why did you not listen to him?" he said to me, angrily. "You would have gone back to the post-house; you would have had some tea; you could have slept till morning; the storm would have blown over, and we should have started. And why such haste? Had it been to get married, now!"

Savéliitch was right. What was there to do? The snow continued to fall — a heap was rising around the *kibitka*. The horses stood motionless, hanging their heads and shivering from time to time.

The driver walked round them, settling their harness, as if he had nothing else to do. Savéliitch grumbled. I was looking all round in hopes of perceiving some indication of a house or a road; but I could not see anything but the confused whirling of the snowstorm.

All at once I thought I distinguished something black.

"Hullo, driver!" I exclaimed, "what is that black thing over there?"

The driver looked attentively in the direction I was pointing out.

"Heaven only knows, excellency," replied he, resuming his seat.

"It is not a sledge, it is not a tree, and it seems to me that it moves. It must be a wolf or a man."

I ordered him to move towards the unknown object, which came also to meet us. In two minutes I saw it was a man, and we met.

"Hey, there, good man," the driver hailed him, "tell us, do you happen to know the road?"

"This is the road," replied the traveller. "I am on firm ground; but what the devil good does that do you?"

"Listen, my little peasant," said I to him, "do you know this part of the country? Can you guide us to some place where we may pass the night?"

"Do I know this country? Thank heaven," rejoined the stranger, "I have travelled here, on horse and afoot, far and wide. But just look at this weather! One cannot keep the road. Better stay here and wait; perhaps the

hurricane will cease and the sky will clear, and we shall find the road by starlight.”

His coolness gave me courage, and I resigned myself to pass the night on the steppe, commending myself to the care of Providence, when suddenly the stranger, seating himself on the driver’s seat, said —

“Grace be to God, there *is* a house not far off. Turn to the right, and go on.”

“Why should I go to the right?” retorted my driver, ill-humouredly.

“How do you know where the road is that you are so ready to say, ‘Other people’s horses, other people’s harness — whip away!’”

It seemed to me the driver was right.

“Why,” said I to the stranger, “do you think a house is not far off?”

“The wind blew from that direction,” replied he, “and I smelt smoke, a sure sign that a house is near.”

His cleverness and the acuteness of his sense of smell alike astonished me. I bid the driver go where the other wished. The horses ploughed their way through the deep snow. The *kibitka* advanced slowly, sometimes upraised on a drift, sometimes precipitated into a ditch, and swinging from side to side. It was very like a boat on a stormy sea.

Savéliitch groaned deeply as every moment he fell upon me. I lowered the *tsinofka*, I rolled myself up in my cloak and I went to sleep, rocked by the whistle of the storm and the lurching of the sledge. I had then a dream that I have never forgotten, and in which I still see something prophetic, as I recall the strange events of my life. The reader will forgive me if I relate it to him, as he knows, no doubt, by experience how natural it is for man to retain a vestige of superstition in spite of all the scorn for it he may think proper to assume.

I had reached the stage when the real and unreal begin to blend into the first vague visions of drowsiness. It seemed to me that the snowstorm continued, and that we were wandering in the snowy desert. All at once I thought I saw a great gate, and we entered the courtyard of our house. My first thought was a fear that my father would be angry at my involuntary return to the paternal roof, and would attribute it to a premeditated disobedience. Uneasy, I got out of my *kibitka*, and I saw my mother come to meet me, looking very sad.

“Don’t make a noise,” she said to me. “Your father is on his death-bed, and wishes to bid you farewell.”

Struck with horror, I followed her into the bedroom. I look round; the room is nearly dark. Near the bed some people were standing, looking sad and cast down. I approached on tiptoe. My mother raised the curtain, and said —

“Andréj Petróvitch, Petróusha has come back; he came back having heard of your illness. Give him your blessing.”

I knelt down. But to my astonishment instead of my father I saw in the bed a black-bearded peasant, who regarded me with a merry look. Full of surprise, I turned towards my mother.

"What does this mean?" I exclaimed. "It is not my father. Why do you want me to ask this peasant's blessing?"

"It is the same thing, Petróusha," replied my mother. "That person is your *godfather*. Kiss his hand, and let him bless you."

I would not consent to this. Whereupon the peasant sprang from the bed, quickly drew his axe from his belt, and began to brandish it in all directions. I wished to fly, but I could not. The room seemed to be suddenly full of corpses. I stumbled against them; my feet slipped in pools of blood. The terrible peasant called me gently, saying to me —

"Fear nothing, come near; come and let me bless you."

Fear had stupified me....

At this moment I awoke. The horses had stopped; Savéliitch had hold of my hand.

"Get out, excellency," said he to me; "here we are."

"Where?" I asked, rubbing my eyes.

"At our night's lodging. Heaven has helped us; we came by chance right upon the hedge by the house. Get out, excellency, as quick as you can, and let us see you get warm."

I got out of the *kibitka*. The snowstorm still raged, but less violently. It was so dark that one might, as we say, have as well been blind. The host received us near the entrance, holding a lantern beneath the skirt of his caftan, and led us into a room, small but prettily clean, lit by a *louchina*. On the wall hung a long carbine and a high Cossack cap.

Our host, a Cossack of the Yaïk, was a peasant of about sixty, still fresh and hale. Savéliitch brought the tea canister, and asked for a fire that he might make me a cup or two of tea, of which, certainly, I never had more need. The host hastened to wait upon him.

"What has become of our guide? Where is he?" I asked Savéliitch.

"Here, your excellency," replied a voice from above.

I raised my eyes to the recess above the stove, and I saw a black beard and two sparkling eyes.

"Well, are you cold?"

"How could I not be cold," answered he, "in a little caftan all holes? I had a *touloup*, but, it's no good hiding it, I left it yesterday in pawn at the brandy shop; the cold did not seem to me then so keen."

At this moment the host re-entered with the boiling *samovar*. I offered our guide a cup of tea. He at once jumped down.

I was struck by his appearance. He was a man about forty, middle height, thin, but broad-shouldered. His black beard was beginning to turn grey; his large quick eyes roved incessantly around. In his face there was an expression rather pleasant, but slightly mischievous. His hair was cut short. He wore a little torn *armak*, and wide Tartar trousers.

I offered him a cup of tea; he tasted it, and made a wry face.

"Do me the favour, your excellency," said he to me, "to give me a glass of brandy; we Cossacks do not generally drink tea."

I willingly acceded to his desire. The host took from one of the shelves of the press a jug and a glass, approached him, and, having looked him well in the face —

“Well, well,” said he, “so here you are again in our part of the world. Where, in heaven’s name, do you come from now?”

My guide winked in a meaning manner, and replied by the well-known saying —

“The sparrow was flying about in the orchard; he was eating hempseed; the grandmother threw a stone at him, and missed him. And you, how are you all getting on?”

“How are we all getting on?” rejoined the host, still speaking in proverbs.

“Vespers were beginning to ring, but the wife of the *pope* forbid it; the pope went away on a visit, and the devils are abroad in the churchyard.”

“Shut up, uncle,” retorted the vagabond. “When it rains there will be mushrooms, and when you find mushrooms you will find a basket to put them in. But now” (he winked a second time) “put your axe behind your back, the gamekeeper is abroad. To the health of your excellency.”

So saying he took the glass, made the sign of the cross, and swallowed his brandy at one gulp, then, bowing to me, returned to his lair above the stove.

I could not then understand a single word of the thieves’ slang they employed. It was only later on that I understood that they were talking about the army of the Yaïk, which had only just been reduced to submission after the revolt of 1772.

Savéliitch listened to them talking with a very discontented manner, and cast suspicious glances, sometimes on the host and sometimes on the guide.

The kind of inn where we had sought shelter stood in the very middle of the steppe, far from the road and from any dwelling, and certainly was by no means unlikely to be a robber resort. But what could we do? We could not dream of resuming our journey. Savéliitch’s uneasiness amused me very much. I stretched myself on a bench. My old retainer at last decided to get up on the top of the stove, while the host lay down on the floor. They all soon began to snore, and I myself soon fell dead asleep.

When I awoke, somewhat late, on the morrow I saw that the storm was over. The sun shone brightly; the snow stretched afar like a dazzling sheet. The horses were already harnessed. I paid the host, who named such a mere trifle as my reckoning that Savéliitch did not bargain as he usually did. His suspicions of the evening before were quite gone. I called the guide to thank him for what he had done for us, and I told Savéliitch to give him half a rouble as a reward.

Savéliitch frowned.

“Half a rouble!” cried he. “Why? Because you were good enough to bring him yourself to the inn? I will obey you, excellency, but we have no half roubles to spare. If we take to giving gratuities to everybody we shall end by dying of hunger.”

I could not dispute the point with Savéliitch; my money, according to my solemn promise, was entirely at his disposal. Nevertheless, I was annoyed that I was not able to reward a man who, if he had not brought me out of fatal danger, had, at least, extricated me from an awkward dilemma.

"Well," I said, coolly, to Savéliitch, "if you do not wish to give him half a rouble give him one of my old coats; he is too thinly clad. Give him my hareskin *touloup*."

"Have mercy on me, my father, Petr' Andréjitch!" exclaimed Savéliitch. "What need has he of your *touloup*? He will pawn it for drink, the dog, in the first tavern he comes across."

"That, my dear old fellow, is no longer your affair," said the vagabond, "whether I drink it or whether I do not. His excellency honours me with a coat off his own back. It is his excellency's will, and it is your duty as a serf not to kick against it, but to obey."

"You don't fear heaven, robber that you are," said Savéliitch, angrily. "You see the child is still young and foolish, and you are quite ready to plunder him, thanks to his kind heart. What do you want with a gentleman's *touloup*? You could not even put it across your cursed broad shoulders."

"I beg you will not play the wit," I said to my follower. "Get the cloak quickly."

"Oh! good heavens!" exclaimed Savéliitch, bemoaning himself. "A *touloup* of hareskin, and still quite new! And to whom is it given? — to a drunkard in rags."

However, the *touloup* was brought. The vagabond began trying it on directly. The *touloup*, which had already become somewhat too small for me, was really too tight for him. Still, with some trouble, he succeeded in getting it on, though he cracked all the seams. Savéliitch gave, as it were, a subdued howl when he heard the threads snapping.

As to the vagabond, he was very pleased with my present. He ushered me to my *kibitka*, and saying, with a low bow, "Thanks, your excellency; may Heaven reward you for your goodness; I shall never forget, as long as I live, your kindnesses," went his way, and I went mine, without paying any attention to Savéliitch's sulkiness.

I soon forgot the snowstorm, the guide, and my hareskin *touloup*.

Upon arrival at Orenburg I immediately waited on the General. I found a tall man, already bent by age. His long hair was quite white; his old uniform reminded one of a soldier of Tzarina Anne's time, and he spoke with a strongly-marked German accent. I gave him my father's letter. Upon reading his name he cast a quick glance at me.

"Ah," said he, "it was but a short time Andréj Petróvitch was your age, and now he has got a fine fellow of a son. Well, well — time, time."

He opened the letter, and began reading it half aloud, with a running fire of remarks —

"Sir, I hope your excellency' — What's all this ceremony? For shame! I wonder he's not ashamed of himself! Of course, discipline before everything; but is it thus one writes to an old comrade? 'Your excellency

will not have forgotten' — Humph! 'And when under the late Field Marshal München during the campaign, as well as little Caroline' — Eh! eh! *bruder!* So he still remembers our old pranks? 'Now for business. I send you my rogue' — Hum! 'Hold him with gloves of porcupine-skin' — What does that mean — 'gloves of porcupine-skin?' It must be a Russian proverb.

"What does it mean, 'hold with gloves of porcupine-skin?'" resumed he, turning to me.

"It means," I answered him, with the most innocent face in the world, "to treat someone kindly, not too strictly, to leave him plenty of liberty; that is what holding with gloves of porcupine-skin means."

"Humph! I understand."

"'And not give him any liberty' — No; it seems that porcupine-skin gloves means something quite different.' Enclosed is his commission' — Where is it then? Ah! here it is! — 'in the roll of the Sémenofsky Regiment' — All right; everything necessary shall be done. 'Allow me to salute you without ceremony, and like an old friend and comrade' — Ah! he has at last remembered it all," etc., etc.

"Well, my little father," said he, after he had finished the letter and put my commission aside, "all shall be done; you shall be an officer in the — th Regiment, and you shall go to-morrow to Fort Bélogorsk, where you will serve under the orders of Commandant Mironoff, a brave and worthy man. There you will really serve and learn discipline. There is nothing for you to do at Orenburg; amusement is bad for a young man. To-day I invite you to dine with me."

"Worse and worse," thought I to myself. "What good has it done me to have been a sergeant in the Guard from my cradle? Where has it brought me? To the — th Regiment, and to a fort stranded on the frontier of the Kirghiz-Kaïsak Steppes!"

I dined at Andréj Karlovitch's, in the company of his old aide de camp. Strict German economy was the rule at his table, and I think that the dread of a frequent guest at his bachelor's table contributed not a little to my being so promptly sent away to a distant garrison.

The next day I took leave of the General, and started for my destination.

CHAPTER III.

THE LITTLE POET.

The little fort of Bélogorsk lay about forty versts from Orenburg. From this town the road followed along by the rugged banks of the R. Yaïk. The river was not yet frozen, and its lead-coloured waves looked almost black contrasted with its banks white with snow. Before me stretched the Kirghiz Steppes. I was lost in thought, and my reverie was tinged with melancholy. Garrison life did not offer me much attraction. I tried to imagine what my future chief, Commandant Mironoff, would be like. I saw in my mind's eye a strict, morose old man, with no ideas beyond the service, and prepared to put me under arrest for the smallest trifle.

Twilight was coming on; we were driving rather quickly.

"Is it far from here to the fort?" I asked the driver.

"Why, you can see it from here," replied he.

I began looking all round, expecting to see high bastions, a wall, and a ditch. I saw nothing but a little village, surrounded by a wooden palisade. On one side three or four haystacks, half covered with snow; on another a tumble-down windmill, whose sails, made of coarse limetree bark, hung idly down.

"But where is the fort?" I asked, in surprise.

"There it is yonder, to be sure," rejoined the driver, pointing out to me the village which we had just reached.

I noticed near the gateway an old iron cannon. The streets were narrow and crooked, nearly all the *izbás* were thatched. I ordered him to take me to the Commandant, and almost directly my *kibitka* stopped before a wooden house, built on a knoll near the church, which was also in wood.

No one came to meet me. From the steps I entered the ante-room. An old pensioner, seated on a table, was busy sewing a blue patch on the elbow of a green uniform. I begged him to announce me.

"Come in, my little father," he said to me; "we are all at home."

I went into a room, very clean, but furnished in a very homely manner. In one corner there stood a dresser with crockery on it. Against the wall hung, framed and glazed, an officer's commission. Around this were arranged some bark pictures, representing the "Taking of Kustrin" and of "Otchakóf," "The Choice of the Betrothed," and the "Burial of the Cat by the Mice." Near the window sat an old woman wrapped in a shawl, her head tied up in a handkerchief. She was busy winding thread, which a little, old, one-eyed man in an officer's uniform was holding on his outstretched hands.

"What do you want, my little father?" she said to me, continuing her employment.

I answered that I had been ordered to join the service here, and that, therefore, I had hastened to report myself to the Commandant. With these

words I turned towards the little, old, one-eyed man, whom I had taken for the Commandant. But the good lady interrupted the speech with which I had prepared myself.

"Iván Kouzmitch is not at home," said she. "He is gone to see Father Garassim. But it's all the same, I am his wife. Be so good as to love us and take us into favour. Sit down, my little father."

She called a servant, and bid her tell the "*ouriadnik*" to come. The little, old man was looking curiously at me with his one eye.

"Might I presume to ask you," said he to me, "in what regiment you have deigned to serve?"

I satisfied his curiosity.

"And might I ask you," continued he, "why you have condescended to exchange from the Guard into our garrison?"

I replied that it was by order of the authorities.

"Probably for conduct unbecoming an officer of the Guard?" rejoined my indefatigable questioner.

"Will you be good enough to stop talking nonsense?" the wife of the Commandant now said to him. "You can see very well that this young man is tired with his journey. He has something else to do than to answer your questions. Hold your hands better. And you, my little father," she continued, turning to me, "do not bemoan yourself too much because you have been shoved into our little hole of a place; you are not the first, and you will not be the last. One may suffer, but one gets accustomed to it. For instance, Chvabrine, Alexey Iványtch, was transferred to us four years ago on account of a murder. Heaven knows what ill-luck befel him. It happened one day he went out of the town with a lieutenant, and they had taken swords, and they set to pinking one another, and Alexey Iványtch killed the lieutenant, and before a couple of witnesses. Well, well, there's no heading ill-luck!"

At this moment the "*ouriadnik*," a young and handsome Cossack, came in.

"Maximitch," the Commandant's wife said to him, "find a quarter for this officer, and a clean one."

"I obey, Vassilissa Igorofna," replied the "*ouriadnik*." "Ought not his excellency to go to Iván Poléjaïeff?"

"You are doting, Maximitch," retorted the Commandant's wife; "Poléjaïeff has already little enough room; and, besides, he is my gossip; and then he does not forget that we are his superiors. Take the gentleman — What is your name, my little father?"

"Petr' Andréjitch."

"Take Petr' Andréjitch to Séméon Kouzoff's. The rascal let his horse get into my kitchen garden. Is everything in order, Maximitch?"

"Thank heaven! all is quiet," replied the Cossack. "Only Corporal Prokoroff has been fighting in the bathhouse with the woman Oustinia Pegoulina for a pail of hot water."

"Iván Ignatiitch," said the Commandant's wife to the little one-eyed man, "you must decide between Prokoroff and Oustinia which is to blame, and punish both of them; and you, Maximitch, go, in heaven's name! Petr' Andréjitch, Maximitch will take you to your lodging."

I took leave. The "*ouriadnik*" led me to an *izbá*, which stood on the steep bank of the river, quite at the far end of the little fort. Half the *izbá* was occupied by the family of Séméon Kouzoff, the other half was given over to me. This half consisted of a tolerably clean room, divided into two by a partition.

Savéliitch began to unpack, and I looked out of the narrow window. I saw stretching out before me a bare and dull steppe; on one side there stood some huts. Some fowls were wandering down the street. An old woman, standing on a doorstep, holding in her hand a trough, was calling to some pigs, the pigs replying by amicable grunts.

And it was in such a country as this I was condemned to pass my youth!

Overcome by bitter grief, I left the window, and went to bed supperless, in spite of Savéliitch's remonstrances, who continued to repeat, in a miserable tone —

"Oh, good heavens! he does not deign to eat anything. What would my mistress say if the child should fall ill?"

On the morrow, I had scarcely begun to dress before the door of my room opened, and a young officer came in. He was undersized, but, in spite of irregular features, his bronzed face had a remarkably gay and lively expression.

"I beg your pardon," said he to me in French, "for coming thus unceremoniously to make your acquaintance. I heard of your arrival yesterday, and the wish to see at last a human being took such possession of me that I could not resist any longer. You will understand that when you have been here some time!"

I easily guessed that this was the officer sent away from the Guard in consequence of the duel.

We made acquaintance. Chvabrine was very witty. His conversation was lively and interesting. He described to me, with, much raciness and gaiety, the Commandant's family, the society of the fort, and, in short, all the country where my fate had led me.

I was laughing heartily when the same pensioner whom I had seen patching his uniform in the Commandant's ante-room, came in with an invitation to dinner for me from Vassilissa Igorofna.

Chvabrine said he should accompany me.

As we drew near the Commandant's house we saw in the square about twenty little old pensioners, with long pigtailed and three-cornered hats. They were drawn up in line. Before them stood the Commandant, a tall, old man, still hale, in a dressing-gown and a cotton nightcap.

As soon as he perceived us he came up, said a few pleasant words to me, and went back to the drill. We were going to stop and see the manoeuvres, but he begged us to go at once to Vassilissa Igorofna's, promising to follow

us directly. "Here," said he, "there's really nothing to see."

Vassilissa Igorofna received us with simplicity and kindness, and treated me as if she had known me a long time. The pensioner and Palashka were laying the cloth.

"What possesses my Iván Kouzmitch to-day to drill his troops so long?" remarked the Commandant's wife. "Palashka, go and fetch him for dinner. And what can have become of Masha?"

Hardly had she said the name than a young girl of sixteen came into the room. She had a fresh, round face, and her hair was smoothly put back behind her ears, which were red with shyness and modesty. She did not please me very much at first sight; I looked at her with prejudice. Chvabrine had described Marya, the Commandant's daughter, to me as being rather silly. She went and sat down in a corner, and began to sew. Still the "*chtchi*" had been brought in. Vassilissa Igorofna, not seeing her husband come back, sent Palashka for the second time to call him.

"Tell the master that the visitors are waiting, and the soup is getting cold. Thank heaven, the drill will not run away. He will have plenty of time to shout as much as he likes."

The Commandant soon appeared, accompanied by the little old one-eyed man.

"What does all this mean, my little father?" said his wife to him.

"Dinner has been ready a long time, and we cannot make you come."

"But don't you see, Vassilissa Igorofna," replied Iván Kouzmitch, "I was very busy drilling my little soldiers."

"Nonsense," replied she, "that's only a boast; they are past service, and you don't know much about it. You should have stayed at home, and said your prayers; that would have been much better for you. My dear guests, pray sit down to table."

We took our places. Vassilissa Igorofna never ceased talking for a moment, and overwhelmed me with questions. Who were my parents, were they alive, where did they live, and what was their income? When she learnt that my father had three hundred serfs —

"Well!" she exclaimed, "there are rich people in this world! And as to us, my little father, we have as to souls only the servant girl, Palashka. Well, thank heaven, we get along little by little. We have only one care on our minds — Masha, a girl who must be married. And what dowry has she got? A comb and two-pence to pay for a bath twice a year. If only she could light on some honest man! If not she must remain an old maid!"

I glanced at Marya Ivánofna. She had become quite red, and tears were rolling down, even into her plate. I was sorry for her, and I hastened to change the conversation.

"I have heard," I exclaimed (very much to the point), "that the Bashkirs intend to attack your fort."

"Who told you that, my little father?" replied Iván Kouzmitch.

"I heard it said at Orenburg," replied I.

“That’s all rubbish,” said the Commandant. “We have not heard a word of it for ever so long. The Bashkir people have been thoroughly awed, and the Kirghiz, too, have had some good lessons. They won’t dare to attack us, and if they venture to do so I’ll give them such a fright that they won’t stir for ten years at least.”

“And you are not afraid,” I continued, addressing the Commandant’s wife, “to stay in a fort liable to such dangers?”

“It’s all a question of custom, my little father,” answered she. “It’s twenty years ago now since we were transferred from the regiment here. You would never believe how frightened I used to be of those confounded Pagans. If ever I chanced to see their hairy caps, or hear their howls, believe me, my little father, I nearly died of it. And now I am so accustomed to it that I should not budge an inch if I was told that the rascals were prowling all around the fort.”

“Vassilissa Igorofna is a very brave lady,” remarked Chvabrine, gravely. “Iván Kouzmitch knows something of that.”

“Oh! yes, indeed,” said Iván Kouzmitch, “she’s no coward.”

“And Marya Ivánofna,” I asked her mother, “is she as bold as you?”

“Masha!” replied the lady; “no, Masha is a coward. Till now she has never been able to hear a gun fired without trembling all over. It is two years ago now since Iván Kouzmitch took it into his head to fire his cannon on my birthday; she was so frightened, the poor little dove, she nearly ran away into the other world. Since that day we have never fired that confounded cannon any more.”

We got up from table; the Commandant and his wife went to take their siesta, and I went to Chvabrine’s quarters, where we passed the evening together.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DUEL.

Several weeks passed, during which my life in Fort Bélogorsk became not merely endurable, but even pleasant. I was received like one of the family in the household of the Commandant. The husband and wife were excellent people. Iván Kouzmitch, who had been a child of the regiment, had become an officer, and was a simple, uneducated man, but good and true. His wife led him completely, which, by the way, very well suited his natural laziness.

It was Vassilissa Igorofna who directed all military business as she did that of her household, and commanded in the little fort as she did in her house. Marya Ivánofna soon ceased being shy, and we became better acquainted. I found her a warm-hearted and sensible girl. By degrees I became attached to this honest family, even to Iwán Ignatiitch, the one-eyed lieutenant, whom Chvabrine accused of secret intrigue with Vassilissa Igorofna, an accusation which had not even a shadow of probability. But that did not matter to Chvabrine.

I became an officer. My work did not weigh heavily upon me. In this heaven-blest fort there was no drill to do, no guard to mount, nor review to pass. Sometimes the Commandant instructed his soldiers for his own pleasure. But he had not yet succeeded in teaching them to know their right hand from their left. Chvabrine had some French books; I took to reading, and I acquired a taste for literature. In the morning I used to read, and I tried my hand at translations, sometimes even at compositions in verse. Nearly every day I dined at the Commandant's, where I usually passed the rest of the day. In the evening, Father Garasim used to drop in, accompanied by his wife, Akoulina, who was the sturdiest gossip of the neighbourhood. It is scarcely necessary to say that every day we met, Chvabrine and I. Still hour by hour his conversation pleased me less. His everlasting jokes about the Commandant's family, and, above all, his witty remarks upon Marya Ivánofna, displeased me very much. I had no other society but that of this family within the little fort, but I did not want any other.

In spite of all the prophecies, the Bashkirs did not revolt. Peace reigned around our little fort. But this peace was suddenly troubled by war within.

I have already said I dabbled a little in literature. My attempts were tolerable for the time, and Soumarokoff himself did justice to them many years later. One day I happened to write a little song which pleased me. It is well-known that under colour of asking advice, authors willingly seek a benevolent listener; I copied out my little song, and took it to Chvabrine, the only person in the fort who could appreciate a poetical work.

After a short preface, I drew my manuscript from my pocket, and read to him the following verses:

"By waging war with thoughts of love
I try to forget my beauty;
Alas! by flight from Masha,
I hope my freedom to regain!

"But the eyes which enslaved me are ever before me.
My soul have they troubled and ruined my rest.

"Oh! Masha, who knowest my sorrows,
Seeing me in this miserable plight,
Take pity on thy captive."

"What do you think of that?" I said to Chvabrine, expecting praise as a tribute due to me. But to my great displeasure Chvabrine, who usually showed kindness, told me flatly my song was worth nothing.

"Why?" I asked, trying to hide my vexation.

"Because such verses," replied he, "are only worthy of my master Trédiakofski, and, indeed, remind me very much of his little erotic couplets."

He took the MSS. from my hand and began unmercifully criticizing each verse, each word, cutting me up in the most spiteful way. That was too much for me; I snatched the MSS. out of his hands, and declared that never, no never, would I ever again show him one of my compositions. Chvabrine did not laugh the less at this threat.

"Let us see," said he, "if you will be able to keep your word; poets have as much need of an audience as Iván Kouzmitch has need of his '*petit verre*' before dinner. And who is this Masha to whom you declare your tender sentiments and your ardent flame? Surely it must be Marya Ivánofna?"

"That does not concern you," replied I, frowning; "I don't ask for your advice nor your suppositions."

"Oh! oh! a vain poet and a discreet lover," continued Chvabrine, irritating me more and more. "Listen to a little friendly advice: if you wish to succeed, I advise you not to stick at songs."

"What do you mean, sir?" I exclaimed; "explain yourself if you please."

"With pleasure," rejoined he. "I mean that if you want to be well with Masha Mironoff, you need only make her a present of a pair of earrings instead of your languishing verses."

My blood boiled.

"Why have you such an opinion of her?" I asked him, restraining with difficulty my indignation.

"Because," replied he, with a satanic smile, "because I know by experience her views and habits."

"You lie, you rascal!" I shouted at him, in fury. "You are a shameless liar."

Chvabrine's face changed.

"This I cannot overlook," he said; "you shall give me satisfaction."

"Certainly, whenever you like," replied I, joyfully; for at that moment I was ready to tear him in pieces.

I rushed at once to Iwán Ignatiitch, whom I found with a needle in his hand. In obedience to the order of the Commandant's wife, he was threading mushrooms to be dried for the winter.

"Ah! Petr' Andréjitch," said he, when he saw me; "you are welcome. On what errand does heaven send you, if I may presume to ask?"

I told him in a few words that I had quarrelled with Alexey Iványtch, and that I begged him, Iwán Ignatiitch, to be my second. Iwán Ignatiitch heard me till I had done with great attention, opening wide his single eye.

"You deign to tell me," said he, "that you wish to kill Alexey Iványtch, and that I am to be witness? Is not that what you mean, if I may presume to ask you?"

"Exactly."

"But, good heavens, Petr' Andréjitch, what folly have you got in your head? You and Alexey Iványtch have insulted one another; well, a fine affair! You needn't wear an insult hung round your neck. He has said silly things to you, give him some impertinence; he in return will give you a blow, give him in return a box on the ear; he another, you another, and then you part. And presently we oblige you to make peace. Whereas now — is it a good thing to kill your neighbour, if I may presume to ask you? Even if it were *you* who should kill *him*! May heaven be with him, for I do not love him. But if it be he who is to run you through, you will have made a nice business of it. Who will pay for the broken pots, allow me to ask?"

The arguments of the prudent officer did not deter me. My resolution remained firm.

"As you like," said Iwán Ignatiitch, "do as you please; but what good should I do as witness? People fight; what is there extraordinary in that, allow me to ask? Thank heaven I have seen the Swedes and the Turks at close quarters, and I have seen a little of everything."

I endeavoured to explain to him as best I could the duty of a second, but I found Iwán Ignatiitch quite unmanageable.

"Do as you like," said he; "if I meddled in the matter, it would be to go and tell Iván Kouzmitch, according to the rules of the service, that a criminal deed is being plotted in the fort, in opposition to the interests of the crown, and remark to the Commandant how advisable it would be that he should think of taking the necessary measures."

I was frightened, and I begged Iwán Ignatiitch not to say anything to the Commandant. With great difficulty I managed to quiet him, and at last made him promise to hold his tongue, when I left him in peace.

As usual I passed the evening at the Commandant's. I tried to appear lively and unconcerned in order not to awaken any suspicions, and avoid any too curious questions. But I confess I had none of the coolness of which people boast who have found themselves in the same position. All that evening I felt inclined to be soft-hearted and sentimental.

Marya Ivánofna pleased me more than usual. The thought that perhaps I was seeing her for the last time gave her, in my eyes, a touching grace.

Chvabrine came in. I took him aside and told him about my interview with Iwán Ignatiitch.

"Why any seconds?" he said to me, dryly. "We shall do very well without them."

We decided to fight on the morrow behind the haystacks, at six o'clock in the morning.

Seeing us talking in such a friendly manner, Iwán Ignatiitch, full of joy, nearly betrayed us.

"You should have done that long ago," he said to me, with a face of satisfaction. "Better a hollow peace than an open quarrel."

"What is that you say, Iwán Ignatiitch?" said the Commandant's wife, who was playing patience in a corner. "I did not exactly catch what you said."

Iwán Ignatiitch, who saw my face darken, recollected his promise, became confused, and did not know what to say. Chvabrine came to the rescue.

"Iwán Ignatiitch," said he, "approves of the compact we have made."

"And with whom, my little father, did you quarrel?"

"Why, with Petr' Andréjitch, to be sure, and we even got to high words."

"What for?"

"About a mere trifle, over a little song."

"Fine thing to quarrel over — a little song! How did it happen?"

"Thus. Petr' Andréjitch lately composed a song, and he began singing it to me this morning. So I — I struck up mine, 'Captain's daughter, don't go abroad at dead of night!' As we did not sing in the same key, Petr' Andréjitch became angry. But afterwards he reflected that 'every one is free to sing what he pleases,' and that's all."

Chvabrine's insolence made me furious, but no one else, except myself, understood his coarse allusions. Nobody, at least, took up the subject. From poetry the conversation passed to poets in general, and the Commandant made the remark that they were all rakes and confirmed drunkards; he advised me as a friend to give up poetry as a thing opposed to the service, and leading to no good.

Chvabrine's presence was to me unbearable. I hastened to take leave of the Commandant and his family. After coming home I looked at my sword; I tried its point, and I went to bed after ordering Savéliitch to wake me on the morrow at six o'clock.

On the following day, at the appointed hour, I was already behind the haystacks, waiting for my foeman. It was not long before he appeared.

"We may be surprised," he said to me; "we must make haste."

We laid aside our uniforms, and in our waistcoats we drew our swords from the scabbard.

At this moment Iwán Ignatiitch, followed by five pensioners, came out from behind a heap of hay. He gave us an order to go at once before the Commandant. We sulkily obeyed. The soldiers surrounded us, and we

followed Iván Ignatiitch who brought us along in triumph, walking with a military step, with majestic gravity.

We entered the Commandant's house. Iván Ignatiitch threw the door wide open, and exclaimed, emphatically —

“They are taken!”

Vassilissa Igorofna ran to meet us.

“What does all this mean? Plotting assassination in our very fort! Iván Kouzmitch, put them under arrest at once. Petr' Andréjitch, Alexey Iványtch, give up your swords, give them up — give them up. Palashka, take away the swords to the garret. Petr' Andréjitch, I did not expect this of you; aren't you ashamed of yourself? As to Alexey Iványtch, it's different; he was transferred from the Guard for sending a soul into the other world. He does not believe in our Lord! But do you wish to do likewise?”

Iván Kouzmitch approved of all his wife said, repeating —

“Look there, now, Vassilissa Igorofna is quite right — duels are formally forbidden by martial law.”

Palashka had taken away our swords, and had carried them to the garret. I could not help laughing. Chvabrine looked grave.

“In spite of all the respect I have for you,” he said, coolly, to the Commandant's wife, “I cannot help remarking that you are giving yourself useless trouble by trying us at your tribunal. Leave this cure do Iván Kouzmitch — it is his business.”

“What! what! my little father!” retorted the Commandant's wife, “are not husband and wife the same flesh and spirit? Iván Kouzmitch, are you trifling? Lock them up separately, and keep them on bread and water till this ridiculous idea goes out of their heads. And Father Garasim shall make them do penance that they may ask pardon of heaven and of men.”

Iván Kouzmitch did not know what to do. Marya Ivánofna was very pale. Little by little the storm sank. The Commandant's wife became more easy to deal with. She ordered us to make friends. Palashka brought us back our swords. We left the house apparently reconciled. Iván Ignatiitch accompanied us.

“Weren't you ashamed,” I said to him, angrily, “thus to denounce us to the Commandant after giving me your solemn word not to do so?”

“As God is holy,” replied he, “I said nothing to Iván Kouzmitch; it was Vassilissa Igorofna who wormed it all out of me. It was she who took all the necessary measures unknown to the Commandant. As it is, heaven be praised that it has all ended in this way.”

After this reply he returned to his quarters, and I remained alone with Chvabrine.

“Our affair can't end thus,” I said to him.

“Certainly not,” rejoined Chvabrine. “You shall wash out your insolence in blood. But they will watch us; we must pretend to be friends for a few days. Good-bye.”

And we parted as if nothing had happened.

Upon my return to the Commandant's, I sat down according to my custom by Marya Ivánofna; her father was not at home, and her mother was engaged with household cares. We spoke in a low voice Marya Ivánofna reproached me tenderly for the anxiety my quarrel with Chvabrine had occasioned her.

"My heart failed me," said she, "when they came to tell us that you were going to draw swords on each other. How strange men are! For a word forgotten the next week they are ready to cut each other's throats, and to sacrifice not only their life, but their honour, and the happiness of those who — But I am sure it was not you who began the quarrel; it was Alexey Iványtch who was the aggressor."

"What makes you think so, Marya?"

"Why, because — because he is so sneering. I do not like Alexey Iványtch; I even dislike him. Yet, all the same, I should not have liked him to dislike me; it would have made me very uneasy."

"And what do you think, Marya Ivánofna, does he dislike you or no?"

Marya Ivánofna looked disturbed, and grew very red.

"I think," she said, at last, "I think he likes me."

"Why?"

"Because he proposed to me."

"Proposed to you! When?"

"Last year, two months before you came."

"And you did not consent?"

"As you see, Alexey Iványtch is a man of wit, and of good family, to be sure, well off, too; but only to think of being obliged to kiss him before everybody under the marriage crown! No, no; nothing in the world would induce me."

The words of Marya Ivánofna enlightened me, and made many things clear to me. I understood now why Chvabrine so persistently followed her up. He had probably observed our mutual attraction, and was trying to detach us one from another.

The words which had provoked our quarrel seemed to me the more infamous when, instead of a rude and coarse joke, I saw in them a premeditated calumny.

The wish to punish the barefaced liar took more entire possession of me, and I awaited impatiently a favourable moment. I had not to wait long. On the morrow, just as I was busy composing an elegy, and I was biting my pen as I searched for a rhyme, Chvabrine tapped at my window. I laid down the pen, and I took up my sword and left the house.

"Why delay any longer?" said Chvabrine. "They are not watching us any more. Let us go to the river-bank; there nobody will interrupt us."

We started in silence, and after having gone down a rugged path we halted at the water's edge and crossed swords.

Chvabrine was a better swordsman than I was, but I was stronger and bolder, and M. Beaupré, who had, among other things, been a soldier, had given me some lessons in fencing, by which I had profited.

Chvabrine did not in the least expect to find in me such a dangerous foeman. For a long while we could neither of us do the other any harm, but at last, noticing that Chvabrine was getting tired, I vigorously attacked him, and almost forced him backwards into the river.

Suddenly I heard my own name called in a loud voice. I quickly turned my head, and saw Savéliitch running towards me down the path. At this moment I felt a sharp prick in the chest, under the right shoulder, and I fell senseless.

CHAPTER V.

LOVE.

When I came to myself I remained some time without understanding what had befallen me, nor where I chanced to be. I was in bed in an unfamiliar room, and I felt very weak indeed. Savéliitch was standing by me, a light in his hand. Someone was unrolling with care the bandages round my shoulder and chest. Little by little my ideas grew clearer. I recollected my duel and guessed without any difficulty that I had been wounded. At this moment the door creaked slightly on its hinges.

"Well, how is he getting on?" whispered a voice which thrilled through me.

"Always the same still," replied Savéliitch, sighing; "always unconscious, as he has now been these four days."

I wished to turn, but I had not strength to do so.

"Where am I? Who is there?" I said, with difficulty. Marya Ivánofna came near to my bed and leaned gently over me.

"How do you feel?" she said to me.

"All right, thank God!" I replied in a weak voice. "It is you, Marya Ivánofna; tell me —"

I could not finish. Savéliitch exclaimed, joy painted on his face —

"He is coming to himself! — he is coming to himself! Oh! thanks be to heaven! My father Petr' Andréjitch, have you frightened me enough? Four days! That seems little enough to say, but —"

Marya Ivánofna interrupted him.

"Do not talk to him too much, Savéliitch; he is still very weak."

She went away, shutting the door carefully.

I felt myself disturbed with confused thoughts. I was evidently in the house of the Commandant, as Marya Ivánofna could thus come and see me! I wished to question Savéliitch; but the old man shook his head and turned a deaf ear. I shut my eyes in displeasure, and soon fell asleep. Upon waking I called Savéliitch, but in his stead I saw before me Marya Ivánofna, who greeted me in her soft voice. I cannot describe the delicious feeling which thrilled through me at this moment, I seized her hand and pressed it in a transport of delight, while bedewing it with my tears. Marya did not withdraw it, and all of a sudden I felt upon my cheek the moist and burning imprint of her lips. A wild flame of love thrilled through my whole being.

"Dear, good Marya Ivánofna," I said to her, "be my wife. Consent to give me happiness."

She became reasonable again.

"For heaven's sake, calm yourself," she said, withdrawing her hand. "You are still in danger; your wound may reopen; be careful of yourself — were it only for my sake."

After these words she went away, leaving me at the height of happiness. I felt that life was given back to me.

"She will be mine! She loves me!"

This thought filled all my being.

From this moment I hourly got better. It was the barber of the regiment who dressed my wound, for there was no other doctor in all the fort, and, thank God, he did not attempt any doctoring. Youth and nature hastened my recovery. All the Commandant's family took the greatest care of me. Marya Ivánofna scarcely ever left me. It is unnecessary to say that I seized the first favourable opportunity to resume my interrupted proposal, and this time Marya heard me more patiently. She naïvely avowed to me her love, and added that her parents would, in all probability, rejoice in her happiness.

"But think well about it," she used to say to me. "Will there be no objections on the part of your family?"

These words made me reflect. I had no doubt of my mother's tenderness; but knowing the character and way of thinking of my father, I foresaw that my love would not touch him very much, and that he would call it youthful folly. I frankly confessed this to Marya Ivánofna, but in spite of this I resolved to write to my father as eloquently as possible to ask his blessing. I showed my letter to Marya Ivánofna, who found it so convincing and touching that she had no doubt of success, and gave herself up to the feelings of her heart with all the confidence of youth and love.

I made peace with Chvabrine during the early days of my convalescence.

Iván Kouzmitch said to me, reproaching me for the duel —

"You know, Petr' Andréjitch, properly speaking, I ought to put you under arrest; but you are already sufficiently punished without that. As to Alexey Iványtch, he is confined by my order, and under strict guard, in the corn magazine, and Vassilissa Igorofna has his sword under lock and key. He will have time to reflect and repent at his ease."

I was too happy to cherish the least rancour. I began to intercede for Chvabrine, and the good Commandant, with his wife's leave, agreed to set him at liberty. Chvabrine came to see me. He expressed deep regret for all that had occurred, declared it was all his fault, and begged me to forget the past. Not being of a rancorous disposition, I heartily forgave him both our quarrel and my wound. I saw in his slander the irritation of wounded vanity and rejected love, so I generously forgave my unhappy rival.

I was soon completely recovered, and was able to go back to my quarters. I impatiently awaited the answer to my letter, not daring to hope, but trying to stifle sad forebodings that would arise. I had not yet attempted any explanation as regarded Vassilissa Igorofna and her husband. But my courtship could be no surprise to them, as neither Marya nor myself made any secret of our feelings before them, and we were sure beforehand of their consent.

At last, one fine day, Savéliitch came into my room with a letter in his hand.

I took it trembling. The address was written in my father's hand.

This prepared me for something serious, since it was usually my mother who wrote, and he only added a few lines at the end. For a long time I could not make up my mind to break the seal. I read over the solemn address: —

“To my son, Petr’ Andréjitch Grineff, District of Orenburg, Fort Bélogorsk.”

I tried to guess from my father's handwriting in what mood he had written the letter. At last I resolved to open it, and I did not need to read more than the first few lines to see that the whole affair was at the devil. Here are the contents of this letter: —

“My Son Petr’, —

“We received the 15th of this month the letter in which you ask our parental blessing and our consent to your marriage with Marya Ivánofna, the Mironoff daughter. And not only have I no intention of giving you either my blessing or my consent, but I intend to come and punish you well for your follies, like a little boy, in spite of your officer's rank, because you have shown me that you are not fit to wear the sword entrusted to you for the defence of your country, and not for fighting duels with fools like yourself. I shall write immediately to Andréj Karlovitch to beg him to send you away from Fort Bélogorsk to some place still further removed, so that you may get over this folly.

“Upon hearing of your duel and wound your mother fell ill with sorrow, and she is still confined to her bed.

“What will become of you? I pray God may correct you, though I scarcely dare trust in His goodness.

“Your father,

“A.G.”

The perusal of this letter aroused in me a medley of feelings. The harsh expressions which my father had not scrupled to make use of hurt me deeply; the contempt which he cast on Marya Ivánofna appeared to me as unjust as it was unseemly; while, finally, the idea of being sent away from Fort Bélogorsk dismayed me. But I was, above all, grieved at my mother's illness.

I was disgusted with Savéliitch, never doubting that it was he who had made known my duel to my parents. After walking up and down awhile in my little room, I suddenly stopped short before him, and said to him, angrily —

“It seems that it did not satisfy you that, thanks to you, I've been wounded and at death's door, but that you must also want to kill my mother as well.”

Savéliitch remained motionless, as if struck by a thunderbolt.

“Have pity on me, sir,” he exclaimed, almost sobbing. “What is it you deign to tell me — that I am the cause of your wound? But God knows I was only running to stand between you and Alexey Iványtch's sword. Accursed old age alone prevented me. What have I now done to your

mother?"

"What did you do?" I retorted. "Who told you to write and denounce me?"

Were you put in my service to be a spy upon me?"

"I denounce you!" replied Savéliitch, in tears. "Oh, good heavens! Here, be so good as to read what master has written to me, and see if it was I who denounced you."

With this he drew from his pocket a letter, which he offered to me, and I read as follows: —

"Shame on you, you old dog, for never writing and telling me anything about my son, Petr' Andréjitch, in spite of my strict orders, and that it should be from strangers that I learn his follies! Is it thus you do your duty and act up to your master's wishes? I shall send you to keep the pigs, old rascal, for having hid from me the truth, and for your weak compliance with the lad's whims. On receipt of this letter, I order you to let me know directly the state of his health, which, judging by what I hear, is improving, and to tell me exactly the place where he was hit, and if the wound be well healed."

Evidently Savéliitch had not been the least to blame, and it was I who had insulted him by my suspicions and reproaches. I begged his pardon, but the old man was inconsolable.

"That I should have lived to see it!" repeated he. "These be the thanks that I have deserved of my masters for all my long service. I am an old dog. I'm only fit, to keep pigs, and in addition to all this I am the cause of your wound. No, my father, Petr' Andréjitch, 'tis not I who am to blame, it is rather the confounded '*mossoo*;' it was he who taught you to fight with those iron spits, stamping your foot, as though by ramming and stamping you could defend yourself from a bad man. It was, indeed, worth while spending money upon a '*mossoo*' to teach you that."

But who could have taken the trouble to tell my father what I had done. The General? He did not seem to trouble himself much about me; and, indeed, Iván Kouzmitch had not thought it necessary to report my duel to him. I could not think. My suspicions fell upon Chvabrine; he alone could profit by this betrayal, which might end in my banishment from the fort and my separation from the Commandant's family. I was going to tell all to Marya Ivánofna when she met me on the doorstep.

"What has happened?" she said to me. "How pale you are!"

"All is at an end," replied I, handing her my father's letter.

In her turn she grew pale. After reading the letter she gave it me back, and said, in a voice broken by emotion —

"It was not my fate. Your parents do not want me in your family; God's will be done! God knows better than we do what is fit for us. There is nothing to be done, Petr' Andréjitch; may you at least be happy."

"It shall not be thus!" I exclaimed, seizing her hand. "You love me; I am ready for anything. Let us go and throw ourselves at your parents' feet. They are honest people, neither proud nor hard; they — they will give us

their blessing — we will marry, and then with time, I am sure, we shall succeed in mollifying my father. My mother will intercede for us, and he will forgive me.”

“No, Petr’ Andréjitch,” replied Marya, “I will not marry you without the blessing of your parents. Without their blessing you would not be happy. Let us submit to the will of God. Should you meet with another betrothed, should you love her, *God be with you*, Petr’ Andréjitch, I — I will pray for you both.”

She began to cry, and went away. I meant to follow her to her room; but I felt unable to control myself, and I went home. I was seated, deep in melancholy reflections, when Savéliitch suddenly came and interrupted me.

“Here, sir,” said he, handing me a sheet of paper all covered with writing, “see if I be a spy on my master, and if I try to sow discord betwixt father and son.”

I took the paper from his hand; it was Savéliitch’s reply to the letter he had received. Here it is word for word —

“My lord, Andréj Petróvitch, our gracious father, I have received your gracious letter, in which you deign to be angered with me, your serf, bidding me be ashamed of not obeying my master’s orders. And I, who am not an old dog, but your faithful servant, I do obey my master’s orders, and I have ever served you zealously, even unto white hairs. I did not write to you about Petr’ Andréjitch’s wound in order not to frighten you without cause, and now we hear that our mistress, our mother, Avdotia Vassiliéva is ill of fright, and I shall go and pray heaven for her health. Petr’ Andréjitch has been wounded in the chest, beneath the right shoulder, under one rib, to the depth of a *verchok* and a half, and he has been taken care of in the Commandant’s house, whither we brought him from the river bank, and it was the barber here, Stépan Paramonoff, who treated him; and now Petr’ Andréjitch, thank God, is going on well, and there is nothing but good to tell of him. His superiors, according to hearsay, are well pleased with him, and Vassilissa Igorofna treats him as her own son; and because such an affair should have happened to him you must not reproach him; the horse may have four legs and yet stumble. And you deign to write that you will send me to keep the pigs. My lord’s will be done. And now I salute you down to the ground.

“Your faithful serf,

“ARKHIP SAVÉLIÉFF.”

I could not help smiling once or twice as I read the good old man’s letter. I did not feel equal to writing to my father. And to make my mother easy the letter of Savéliitch seemed to me amply sufficient.

From this day my position underwent a change. Marya Ivánofna scarcely ever spoke to me, and even tried to avoid me. The Commandant’s house became unbearable to me; little by little I accustomed myself to stay alone in my quarters.

At first Vassilissa Igorofna remonstrated, but, seeing I persisted in my line of conduct, she left me in peace. I only saw Iván Kouzmitch when

military duties brought us in contact. I had only rare interviews with Chvabrine, whom I disliked the more that I thought I perceived in him a secret enmity, which confirmed all the more my suspicions. Life became a burden to me. I gave myself up, a prey to dark melancholy, which was further fed by loneliness and inaction. My love burnt the more hotly for my enforced quiet, and tormented me more and more. I lost all liking for reading and literature. I was allowing myself to be completely cast down, and I dreaded either becoming mad or dissolute, when events suddenly occurred which strongly influenced my life, and gave my mind a profound and salutary rousing.

CHAPTER VI.

PUGATCHÉF.

Before beginning to relate those strange events to which I was witness, I must say a few words about the state of affairs in the district of Orenburg about the end of the year 1773. This rich and large province was peopled by a crowd of half-savage tribes, who had lately acknowledged the sovereignty of the Russian Tzars. Their perpetual revolts, their impatience of all rule and civilized life, their treachery and cruelty, obliged the authorities to keep a sharp watch upon them in order to reduce them to submission.

Forts had been placed at suitable points, and in most of them troops had been permanently established, composed of Cossacks, formerly possessors of the banks of the River Yaïk. But even these Cossacks, who should have been a guarantee for the peace and quiet of the country, had for some time shown a dangerous and unruly spirit towards the Imperial Government. In 1772 a riot took place in the principal settlement. This riot was occasioned by the severe measures taken by General Traubenberg, in order to quell the insubordination of the army. The only result was the barbarous murder of Traubenberg, the substitution of new chiefs, and at last the suppression of the revolt by volleys of grape and harsh penalties.

All this befell shortly before my coming to Fort Bélogorsk. Then all was, or seemed, quiet. But the authorities had too lightly lent faith to the pretended repentance of the rebels, who were silently brooding over their hatred, and only awaiting a favourable opportunity to reopen the struggle.

One evening (it was early in October, 1773) I was alone in my quarters, listening to the whistling of the autumn wind and watching the clouds passing rapidly over the moon. A message came from the Commandant that he wished to see me at once at his house. I found there Chvabrine, Iwán Ignatiitch, and the "*ouriadnik*" of the Cossacks. Neither the wife nor daughter of the Commandant was in the room. He greeted me in an absent manner. Then, closing the door, he made everybody sit down, except the "*ouriadnik*," who remained standing, drew a letter from his pocket, and said to us —

"Gentlemen, important news. Listen to what the General writes."

He put on his spectacles and read as follows: —

"To the Commandant of Fort Bélogorsk,

"Captain Mironoff, these. (Secret.)

"I hereby inform you that the fugitive and schismatic Don Cossack, Emelian Pugatchéf, after being guilty of the unpardonable insolence of usurping the name of our late Emperor, Peter III., has assembled a gang of robbers, excited risings in villages on the Yaïk, and taken and oven destroyed several forts, while committing everywhere robberies and murders. In consequence, when you shall receive this, it will be your duty to take such measures as may be necessary against the aforesaid rascally

usurper, and, if possible, crush him completely should he venture to attack the fort confided to your care.”

“Take such measures as may be necessary,” said the Commandant, taking off his spectacles and folding up the paper. “You know it is very easy to say that. The scoundrel seems in force, and we have but a hundred and thirty men, even counting the Cossacks, on whom we must not count too much, be it said, without any reproach to you, Maximitch.” The “*ouriadnik*” smiled. “Nevertheless, let us do our duty, gentlemen. Be ready, place sentries, let there be night patrols in case of attack, shut the gates, and turn out the troops. You, Maximitch, keep a sharp eye on the Cossacks; look to the cannon, and let it be well cleansed; and, above all, let everything be kept secret. Let no one in the fort know anything until the time comes.”

After thus giving his orders, Iván Kouzmitch dismissed us. I went out with Chvabrine, speculating upon what we had just heard.

“What do you think of it? How will it all end?” I asked him.

“God knows,” said he; “we shall see. As yet there is evidently nothing serious. If, however — ”

Then he fell into a brown study while whistling absently a French air.

In spite of all our precautions the news of Pugatchéf’s appearance spread all over the fort. Whatever was the respect in which Iván Kouzmitch held his wife, he would not have revealed to her for the world a secret confided to him on military business.

After receiving the General’s letter he had rather cleverly got rid of Vassilissa Igorofna by telling her that Father Garasim had heard most extraordinary news from Orenburg, which he was keeping most profoundly dark.

Vassilissa Igorofna instantly had a great wish to go and see the Pope’s wife, and, by the advice of Iván Kouzmitch, she took Masha, lest she should be dull all alone.

Left master of the field, Iván Kouzmitch sent to fetch us at once, and took care to shut up Polashka in the kitchen so that she might not spy upon us.

Vassilissa Igorofna came home without having been able to worm anything out of the Pope’s wife; she learnt upon coming in that during her absence Iván Kouzmitch had held a council of war, and that Palashka had been locked up. She suspected that her husband had deceived her, and she immediately began overwhelming him with questions. But Iván Kouzmitch was ready for this onset; he did not care in the least, and he boldly answered his curious better-half —

“Look here, little mother, the country-women have taken it into their heads to light fires with straw, and as that might be the cause of a misfortune, I assembled my officers, and I ordered them to watch that the women do not make fires with straw, but rather with faggots and brambles.”

“And why were you obliged to shut up Polashka?” his wife asked him. “Why was the poor girl obliged to stay in the kitchen till we came back?”

Iván Kouzmitch was not prepared for such a question; he stammered some incoherent words.

Vassilissa Igorofna instantly understood that her husband had deceived her, but as she could not at that moment get anything out of him, she forebore questioning him, and spoke of some pickled cucumbers which Akoulina Pamphilovna knew how to prepare in a superlative manner. All night long Vassilissa Igorofna lay awake trying to think what her husband could have in his head that she was not permitted to know.

The morrow, on her return from mass, she saw Iván Ignatiitch busy clearing the cannon of the rags, small stones, bits of wood, knuckle-bones, and all kinds of rubbish that the little boys had crammed it with.

“What can these warlike preparations mean?” thought the Commandant’s wife. “Can it be that they are afraid of an attack by the Kirghiz; but then is it likely that Iván Kouzmitch would hide from me such a trifle?”

She called Iván Ignatiitch, determined to have out of him the secret which was provoking her feminine curiosity.

Vassilissa Igorofna began by making to him some remarks on household matters, like a judge who begins a cross-examination by questions irrelevant to the subject in hand, in order to reassure and lull the watchfulness of the accused. Then, after a few minutes’ silence, she gave a deep sigh, and said, shaking her head —

“Oh! good Lord! Just think what news! What will come of all this?”

“Eh! my little mother,” replied Iván Ignatiitch; “the Lord is merciful. We have soldiers enough, and much, powder; I have cleared the cannon. Perhaps we may be able to defeat this Pugatchéf. If God do not forsake us, the wolf will eat none of us here.”

“And what manner of man is this Pugatchéf?” questioned the Commandant’s wife.

Iván Ignatiitch saw plainly that he had said too much, and bit his tongue; but it was too late. Vassilissa Igorofna obliged him to tell her all, after giving her word that she would tell no one.

She kept her promise, and did not breathe a word indeed to anyone, save only to the Pope’s wife, and that for the very good reason that the good lady’s cow, being still out on the steppe, might be “lifted” by the robbers.

Soon everybody was talking of Pugatchéf. The rumours abroad about him were very diverse. The Commandant sent the “*ouriadnik*” on a mission to look well into all in the neighbouring village and little forts. The “*ouriadnik*” came back after an absence of two days, and reported that he had seen in the steppe, about sixty versts from the fort, many fires, and that he had heard the Bashkirs say that an innumerable force was approaching. He had nothing of a more detailed or accurate nature to relate, having been afraid of going too far.

We soon began to notice a certain stir among the Cossacks in the garrison. They gathered in all the streets in little groups, spoke among themselves in low voices, and dispersed directly they caught sight of a

dragoon or any other Russian soldier. They were watched. Joulaï, a baptized Kalmuck, revealed to the Commandant something very serious. According to him the "*ouriadnik*" had made a false report. On his return the perfidious Cossack had told his comrades that he had advanced upon the rebels, and that he had been presented to their chief, and that this chief gave him his hand to kiss and had had a long interview with him. At once the Commandant put the "*ouriadnik*" in arrest, and declared Joulaï his substitute. This change was received by the Cossacks with manifest discontent. They grumbled aloud, and Iván Ignatiitch, who executed the Commandant's orders, heard them with his own ears say pretty clearly —

"Only wait a bit, you garrison rat!"

The Commandant had intended to cross-examine his prisoner that same day, but the "*ouriadnik*" had escaped, doubtless with the connivance of his accomplices.

Another thing occurred to augment the Commandant's disquiet; a Bashkir was taken bearing seditious letters. Upon this occasion the Commandant decided upon assembling his officers anew, and in order to do that he wished again to get rid of his wife under some plausible pretext. But as Iván Kouzmitch was one of the most upright and sincere of men he could not think of any other way than that which he had already employed on a previous occasion.

"Do you know, Vassilissa Igorofna," said he to her, while clearing his throat once or twice, "it is said that Father Garosim has received from the town —"

"Hold your tongue," interrupted his wife; "you want again to call a council of war, and talk without me about Emelian Pugatchéf; but you will not deceive me this time."

Iván Kouzmitch opened his eyes wide.

"Well, little mother," said he, "if you know all, stay; there is nothing more to be done, we will talk before you."

"Yes, you are quite right, my little father," rejoined she; "it is of no use your trying to play the sly fox. Send for the officers."

We again met. Iván Kouzmitch read to us, before his wife, Pugatchéf's proclamation, drawn up by some illiterate Cossack. The robber proclaimed his intention of marching directly upon our fort, inviting the Cossacks and the soldiers to join him, and counselling the chiefs not to withstand him, threatening them, should they do so, with the utmost torture.

The proclamation was written in coarse but emphatic terms, and was likely to produce a great impression on the minds of simple people.

"What a rascal," cried the Commandant's wife. "Just look what he dares to propose to us! To go out to meet him and lay our colours at his feet! Oh! the son of a dog! He doesn't then know that we have been forty years in the service, and that, thank heaven, we have had a taste of all sorts! Is it possible that there can have been commandants base and cowardly enough to obey this robber?"

"Such a thing should not be possible," rejoined Iván Kouzmitch; "nevertheless, they say the scoundrel has already got possession of several forts."

"It appears that he is in strength, indeed," observed Chvabrine.

"We shall know directly the amount of his strength," resumed the Commandant. "Vassilissa Igorofna, give me the key of the barn. Iván Ignatiitch, bring up the Bashkir and tell Joulaï to fetch the rods."

"Wait a bit, Iván Kouzmitch," said the Commandant's wife, rising; "let me take Masha out of the house. Without I do so she would hear the cries, and they would frighten her. And as for me, to tell the truth, I am not over curious about such matters. So hoping to see you again — "

Torture was then so rooted in the practice of justice that the beneficial ukase ordaining its abolition remained a long time of none effect. It was thought that the confession of the accused was indispensable to condemnation, an idea not merely unreasonable, but contrary to the dictates of the simplest good sense in legal matters, for, if the denial of the accused be not accepted as proof of his innocence, the extorted confession should still less serve as proof of his guilt. Yet even now I still hear old judges sometimes regret the abolition of this barbarous custom.

But in those days no one ever doubted of the necessity for torture, neither the judges nor the accused themselves. That is why the Commandant's order did not arouse any surprise or emotion among us. Iván Ignatiitch went off to seek the Bashkir, who was under lock and key in the Commandant's barn, and a few minutes later he was brought into the ante-room. The Commandant ordered him to be brought before him.

The Bashkir crossed the sill with difficulty, owing to the wooden shackles he had on his feet. I glanced at him and involuntarily shuddered.

He lifted his high cap and remained near the door. I shall never forget that man; he seemed to be at least seventy years old, and he had neither nose nor ears. His head was shaven, and his beard consisted of a few grey hairs. He was little of stature, thin and bent; but his Tartar eyes still sparkled.

"Eh! eh!" said the Commandant, who recognized by these terrible marks one of the rebels punished in 1741, "you are an old wolf, by what I see. You have already been caught in our traps. 'Tis not the first time you have rebelled, since you have been so well cropped. Come near and tell me who sent you."

The old Bashkir remained silent, and looked at the Commandant with a look of complete idiocy.

"Well, why don't you speak?" continued Iván Kouzmitch. "Don't you understand Russ? Joulaï, ask him in your language who sent him to our fort."

Joulaï repeated Iván Kouzmitch's question in the Tartar language. But the Bashkir looked at him with the same expression, and spoke never a word.

“Jachki!” the Commandant rapped out a Tartar oath, “I’ll make you speak. Here, Joulai, strip him of his striped dressing-gown, his idiot’s dress, and stripe his shoulders. Now then, Joulai, touch him up properly.”

Two pensioners began undressing the Bashkir. Great uneasiness then overspread the countenance of the unhappy man. He began looking all round like a poor little animal in the hands of children. But when one of the pensioners seized his hands in order to twine them round his neck, and, stooping, upraised the old man on his shoulders, when Joulai took the rods and lifted his hands to strike, then the Bashkir gave a long, deep moan, and, throwing back his head, opened his mouth, wherein, instead of a tongue, was moving a short stump.

We were all horrified.

“Well,” said the Commandant, “I see we can get nothing out of him. Joulai, take the Bashkir back to the barn; and as for us, gentlemen, we have still to deliberate.”

We were continuing to discuss our situation, when Vassilissa Igorofna burst into the room, breathless, and looking affrighted.

“What has happened to you?” asked the Commandant, surprised.

“Misery! misery!” replied Vassilissa Igorofna. “Fort Nijnéosern was taken this morning. Father Garasim’s boy has just come back. He saw how it was taken. The Commandant and all the officers have been hanged, all the soldiers are prisoners. The rascals are coming here.”

This unexpected news made a great impression upon me. The Commandant of Fort Nijnéosern, a gentle and quiet young man, was known to me. Two months previously he had passed on his way from Orenburg with his young wife, and he had stayed with Iván Kouzmitch.

The Nijnéosernaia was only twenty-five versts away from our fort. From hour to hour we might expect to be attacked by Pugatchéf. The probable fate of Marya Ivánofna rose vividly before my imagination, and my heart failed me as I thought of it.

“Listen, Iván Kouzmitch,” I said to the Commandant, “it is our duty to defend the fort to the last gasp, that is understood. But we must think of the women’s safety. Send them to Orenburg, if the road be still open, or to some fort further off and safer, which the rascals have not yet had time to reach.”

Iván Kouzmitch turned to his wife.

“Look here, mother, really, had we not better send you away to some more distant place till the rebels be put down?”

“What nonsense!” replied his wife.

“Show me the fortress that bullets cannot reach. In what respect is Bélogorskaia not safe? Thank heaven, we have now lived here more than twenty-one years. We have seen the Bashkirs and the Kirghiz; perhaps we may weary out Pugatchéf here.”

“Well, little mother,” rejoined Iván Kouzmitch, “stay if you like, since you reckon so much on our fort. But what are we to do with Masha? It is all right if we weary him out or if we be succoured. But if the robbers take the

fort?"

"Well, then — "

But here Vassilissa Igorofna could only stammer and become silent, choked by emotion.

"No, Vassilissa Igorofna," resumed the Commandant, who remarked that his words had made a great impression on his wife, perhaps for the first time in her life; "it is not proper for Masha to stay here. Let us send her to Orenburg to her godmother. There are enough soldiers and cannons there, and the walls are stone. And I should even advise you to go away thither, for though you be old yet think on what will befall you if the fort be taken by assault."

"Well! well!" said the wife, "we will send away Masha; but don't ask me to go away, and don't think to persuade me, for I will do no such thing. It will not suit me either in my old age to part from you and go to seek a lonely grave in a strange land. We have lived together; we will die together."

"And you are right," said the Commandant. "Let us see, there is no time to lose. Go and get Masha ready for her journey; to-morrow we will start her off at daybreak, and we will even give her an escort, though, to tell the truth, we have none too many people here. But where is she?"

"At Akoulina Pamphilovna's," answered his wife. "She turned sick when she heard of the taking of Nijnéosern; I dread lest she should fall ill. Oh! God in heaven! that we should have lived to see this!"

Vassilissa Igorofna went away to make ready for her daughter's departure.

The council at the Commandant's still continued, but I no longer took any part in it. Marya Ivánofna reappeared for supper, pale and her eyes red. We supped in silence, and we rose from table earlier than usual. Each of us returned to his quarters after bidding good-bye to the whole family. I purposely forgot my sword, and came back to fetch it. I felt I should find Marya alone; in fact, she met me in the porch, and handed me my sword.

"Good-bye, Petr' Andréjitch," she said to me, crying; "they are sending me to Orenburg. Keep well and happy. Mayhap God will allow us to see one another again, if not — "

She began to sob. I pressed her in my arms.

"God be with you, my angel," I said to her. "My darling, my loved one, whatever befall me, rest assured that my last thought and my last prayer will be for you."

Masha still wept, sheltered on my breast. I kissed her passionately, and abruptly went out.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ASSAULT.

All the night I could not sleep, and I did not even take off my clothes. I had meant in the early morning to gain the gate of the fort, by which Marya Ivánofna was to leave, to bid her a last good-bye. I felt that a complete change had come over me. The agitation of my mind seemed less hard to bear than the dark melancholy in which I had been previously plunged. Blended with the sorrow of parting, I felt within me vague, but sweet, hopes, an eager expectation of coming dangers, and a feeling of noble ambition.

The night passed quickly. I was going out, when my door opened and the corporal came in to tell me that our Cossacks had left the fort during the night, taking away with them by force Joulai, and that around our ramparts unknown people were galloping. The thought that Marya Ivánofna had not been able to get away terrified me to death. I hastily gave some orders to the corporal, and I ran to the Commandant's house.

Day was breaking. I was hurrying down the street when I heard myself called by someone. I stopped.

"Where are you going, if I may presume to ask you?" said Iwán Ignatiitch, catching me up. "Iwán Kouzmitch is on the ramparts, and has sent me to seek you. The '*pugatch*' has come."

"Is Marya Ivánofna gone?" I asked, with an inward trembling.

"She hasn't had time," rejoined Iwán Ignatiitch. "The road to Orenburg is blocked, the fort surrounded, and it's a bad look-out, Petr' Andréjitch."

We went to the ramparts, a little natural height, and fortified by a palisade. We found the garrison here under arms. The cannon had been dragged hither the preceding evening. The Commandant was walking up and down before his little party; the approach of danger had given the old warrior wonderful activity. Out on the steppe, and not very far from the fort, could be seen about twenty horsemen, who appeared to be Cossacks; but amongst them were some Bashkirs, easily distinguished by their high caps and their quivers. The Commandant passed down the ranks of the little army, saying to the soldiers —

"Now, children, let us do well to-day for our mother, the Empress, and let us show all the world that we are brave men, and true to our oaths."

The soldiers by loud shouts expressed their goodwill and assent. Chvabrine remained near me, attentively watching the enemy. The people whom we could see on the steppe, noticing doubtless some stir in the fort, gathered into parties, and consulted together. The Commandant ordered Iwán Ignatiitch to point the cannon at them, and himself applied the match. The ball passed whistling over their heads without doing them any harm. The horsemen at once dispersed at a gallop, and the steppe was deserted.

At this moment Vassilissa Igorofna appeared on the ramparts, followed by Marya, who had not wished to leave her.

"Well," said the Commandant's wife, "how goes the battle? Where is the enemy?"

"The enemy is not far," replied Iván Kouzmitch; "but if God wills all will be well. And you, Masha, are you afraid?"

"No, papa," replied Marya, "I am more frightened alone in the house."

She glanced at me, trying to smile. I squeezed the hilt of my sword, remembering that I had received it the eve from her hand, as if for her defence. My heart burnt within my breast; I felt as if I were her knight; I thirsted to prove to her that I was worthy of her trust, and I impatiently expected the decisive moment.

All at once, coming from a height about eight versts from the fort, appeared fresh parties of horsemen, and soon the whole steppe became covered with people, armed with arrows and lances. Amongst them, dressed in a red caftan, sword in hand, might be seen a man mounted on a white horse, a conspicuous figure. This was Pugatchéf himself.

He stopped, and they closed round him, and soon afterwards, probably by his orders, four men came out of the crowd, and approached our ramparts at full gallop. We recognized in them some of our traitors. One of them waved a sheet of paper above his head; another bore on the point of his pike the head of Joulaï, which he cast to us over the palisade. The head of the poor Kalmuck rolled to the feet of the Commandant.

The traitors shouted to us —

"Don't fire. Come out to receive the Tzar; the Tzar is here."

"Children, fire!" cried the Commandant for all answer.

The soldiers fired a volley. The Cossack who had the letter quivered and fell from his horse; the others fled at full speed. I glanced at Marya Ivánofna. Spellbound with horror at the sight of Joulaï's head, stunned by the noise of the volley, she seemed unconscious. The Commandant called the corporal, and bid him go and take the paper from the fallen Cossack. The corporal went out into the open, and came back leading by its bridle the dead man's horse. He gave the letter to the Commandant.

Iván Kouzmitch read it in a low voice, and tore it into bits. We now saw that the rebels were making ready to attack. Soon the bullets whistled about our ears, and some arrows came quivering around us in the earth and in the posts of the palisade.

"Vassilissa Igorofna," said the Commandant, "this is not a place for women. Take away Masha; you see very well that the girl is more dead than alive."

Vassilissa Igorofna, whom the sound of the bullets had somewhat subdued, glanced towards the steppe, where a great stir was visible in the crowd, and said to her husband —

"Iván Kouzmitch, life and death are in God's hands; bless Masha. Masha, go to your father."

Pale and trembling, Marya approached Iván Kouzmitch and dropped on her knees, bending before him with reverence.

The old Commandant made the sign of the cross three times over her, then raised her up, kissed her, and said to her, in a voice husky with emotion —

“Well, Masha, may you be happy. Pray to God, and He will not forsake you. If an honest man come forward, may God grant you both love and wisdom. Live together as we have lived, my wife and I. And now farewell, Masha. Vassilissa Igorofna, take her away quickly.”

Marya threw herself upon his neck and began sobbing.

“Kiss me, too,” said the Commandant’s wife, weeping. “Good-bye, my Iván Kouzmitch. Forgive me if I have ever vexed you.”

“Good-bye, good-bye, little mother,” said the Commandant, embracing his old companion. “There, now, enough; go away home, and if you have time put Masha on a *sarafan*.”

The Commandant’s wife went away with her daughter. I followed Marya with my eyes; she turned round and made me a last sign.

Iván Kouzmitch came back to us, and turned his whole attention to the enemy. The rebels gathered round their leader, and all at once dismounted hastily.

“Be ready,” the Commandant said to us, “the assault is about to begin.”

At the same moment resounded wild war cries. The rebels were racing down on the fort. Our cannon was loaded with grape. The Commandant allowed them to approach within a very short distance, and again applied a match to the touch-hole. The grape struck in the midst of the crowd, and dispersed it in every direction. The leader alone remained to the fore, brandishing his sword; he appeared to be exhorting them hotly. The yells which had ceased for a moment were redoubled anew.

“Now, children,” cried the Commandant, “open the door, beat the drum, and forward! Follow me for a sally!”

The Commandant, Iván Ignatiitch, and I found ourselves in a moment beyond the parapet. But the garrison, afraid, had not stirred.

“What are you doing, my children?” shouted Iván Kouzmitch. “If we must die, let us die; it is our duty.”

At this moment the rebels fell upon us and forced the entrance of the citadel. The drum ceased, the garrison threw down its arms. I had been thrown down, but I got up and passed helter-skelter with the crowd into the fort. I saw the Commandant wounded in the head, and hard pressed by a little band of robbers clamouring for the keys. I was running to help him, when several strong Cossacks seized me, and bound me with their *kúchaks*, shouting —

“Wait a bit, you will see what will become of you traitors to the Tzar!”

We were dragged along the streets. The inhabitants came out of their houses, offering bread and salt. The bells were rung. All at once shouts announced that the Tzar was in the square waiting to receive the oaths of

the prisoners. All the crowd diverged in that direction, and our keepers dragged us thither.

Pugatchéf was seated in an armchair on the threshold of the Commandant's house. He wore an elegant Cossack caftan, embroidered down the seams. A high cap of marten sable, ornamented with gold tassels, came closely down over his flashing eyes. His face did not seem unknown to me. The Cossack chiefs surrounded him. Father Garasim, pale and trembling, was standing, cross in hand, at the foot of the steps, and seemed to be silently praying for the victims brought before him. In the square a gallows was being hastily erected. When we came near, some Bashkirs drove back the crowd, and we were presented to Pugatchéf.

The bells ceased clanging, and the deepest silence reigned again.

"Where is the Commandant?" asked the usurper. Our "*ouriadnik*" came forward and pointed out Iván Kouzmitch. Pugatchéf looked fiercely upon the old man and said to him, "How was it you dared to oppose me, your rightful Emperor?"

The Commandant, enfeebled by his wound, collected his remaining strength, and replied, in a resolute tone —

"You are not my Emperor; you are a usurper and a robber!"

Pugatchéf frowned and waved his white handkerchief. Several Cossacks immediately seized the old Commandant and dragged him away to the gallows. Astride on the crossbeam, sat the disfigured Bashkir who had been cross-examined on the preceding evening; he held a rope in his hand, and I saw the next moment poor Iván Kouzmitch swinging in the air. Then Iván Ignatiitch was brought before Pugatchéf.

"Swear fidelity," Pugatchéf said to him, "to the Emperor, Petr' Fédorovitch!"

"You are not our Emperor!" replied the lieutenant, repeating his Commandant's words; "you are a robber, my uncle, and a usurper."

Pugatchéf again gave the handkerchief signal, and good Iván Ignatiitch swung beside his old chief. It was my turn. Boldly I looked on Pugatchéf and made ready to echo the answer of my outspoken comrades.

Then, to my inexpressible surprise, I saw among the rebels Chvabrine, who had found time to cut his hair short and to put on a Cossack caftan. He approached Pugatchéf, and whispered a few words in his ear.

"Hang him!" said Pugatchéf, without deigning to throw me a look. The rope was passed about my neck. I began saying a prayer in a low voice, offering up to God a sincere repentance for all my sins, imploring Him to save all those who were dear to my heart. I was already at the foot of the gallows.

"Fear nothing! Fear nothing!" the assassins said to me, perhaps to give me courage, when all at once a shout was heard —

"Stop, accursed ones!"

The executioners stayed their hand. I looked up. Savéliitch lay prostrate at the feet of Pugatchéf.

“Oh! my own father!” my poor follower was saying. “What need have you of the death of this noble child? Let him go free, and you will get a good ransom; but for an example and to frighten the rest, let them hang me, an old man!”

Pugatchéf gave a signal; I was immediately unbound.

“Our father shows you mercy,” they said to me. At this moment I cannot say that I was much overjoyed at my deliverance, but I cannot say either that I regretted it, for my feelings were too upset. I was again brought before the usurper and forced to kneel at his feet. Pugatchéf held out to me his muscular hand. “Kiss his hand! kiss his hand!” was shouted around me. But rather would I have preferred the most cruel torture to such an abasement.

“My father, Petr’ Andréjitch,” whispered Savéliitch to me, and nudged me with his elbow, “don’t be obstinate. What does it matter? Spit and kiss the hand of the rob — , kiss his hand!”

I did not stir. Pugatchéf withdrew his hand and said, smiling —

“Apparently his lordship is quite idiotic with joy; raise him.”

I was helped up and left free. The infamous drama drew to a close.

The villagers began to swear fidelity. One after another they came near, kissed the cross, and saluted the usurper. Then it came to the turn of the soldiers of the garrison. The tailor of the company, armed with his big blunt scissors, cut off their queues. They shook their heads and touched their lips to Pugatchéf’s hand; the latter told them they were pardoned and enrolled amongst his troops.

All this lasted about three hours. At last Pugatchéf rose from his armchair and went down the steps, followed by his chiefs. There was brought for him a white horse, richly caparisoned. Two Cossacks held his arms and helped him into the saddle.

He announced to Father Garasim that he would dine at his house. At this moment arose a woman’s heartrending shrieks. Some robbers were dragging to the steps Vassilissa Igorofna, with dishevelled hair and half-dressed. One of them had already appropriated her cloak; the others were carrying off the mattresses, boxes, linen, tea sets, and all manner of things.

“Oh, my fathers!” cried the poor old woman. “Let me alone, I pray you; my fathers, my fathers, bring me to Iván Kouzmitch.” All of a sudden she perceived the gallows and recognized her husband. “Villains!” she exclaimed, beside herself; “what have you done? Oh, my light, my Iván Kouzmitch! Bold soldier heart, neither Prussian bayonets nor Turkish bullets ever harmed you; and you have died before a vile runaway felon.”

“Silence the old witch,” said Pugatchéf.

A young Cossack struck her with his sword on the head, and she fell dead at the foot of the steps. Pugatchéf went away, all the people crowding in his train.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE UNEXPECTED VISIT.

The square remained empty. I stood in the same place, unable to collect my thoughts, disturbed by so many terrible events.

My uncertainty about Marya Ivánofna's fate tormented me more than I can say. Where was she? What had become of her? Had she had time to hide herself? Was her place of refuge safe and sure? Full of these oppressive thoughts, I went to the Commandant's house. All was empty. The chairs, the tables, the presses were burned, and the crockery in bits; the place was in dreadful disorder. I quickly ran up the little stair which led to Marya's room, where I was about to enter for the first time in my life.

Her bed was topsy-turvy, the press open and ransacked. A lamp still burned before the "*kivott*" equally empty; but a small looking-glass hanging between the door and window had not been taken away. What had become of the inmate of this simple maiden's cell? A terrible apprehension crossed my mind. I thought of Marya in the hands of the robbers. My heart failed me; I burst into tears and murmured the name of my loved one. At this moment I heard a slight noise, and Polashka, very pale, came out from behind the press.

"Oh, Petr' Andréjitch," said she, wringing her hands; "what a day, what horrors!"

"Marya Ivánofna," cried I, impatiently, "where is Marya Ivánofna?"

"The young lady is alive," replied Polashka; "she is hidden at Akoulina Pamphilovna's."

"In the pope's house!" I exclaimed, affrighted. "Good God! Pugatchéf is there!"

I rushed out of the room, in two jumps I was in the street and running wildly towards the pope's house. From within there resounded songs, shouts, and bursts of laughter; Pugatchéf was at the table with his companions. Polashka had followed me; I sent her secretly to call aside Akoulina Pamphilovna. The next minute the pope's wife came out into the ante-room, an empty bottle in her hand.

"In heaven's name where is Marya Ivánofna?" I asked, with indescribable agitation.

"She is in bed, the little dove," replied the pope's wife, "in my bed, behind the partition. Ah! Petr' Andréjitch, a misfortune very nearly happened. But, thank God, all has passed happily over. The villain had scarcely sat down to table before the poor darling began to moan. I nearly died of fright. He heard her."

"Who is that moaning, old woman?" said he.

"I saluted the robber down to the ground.

"My niece, Tzar; she has been ill and in bed for more than a week."

"And your niece, is she young?"

“‘She is young, Tzar.’

“‘Let us see, old woman; show me your niece.’

“‘I felt my heart fail me; but what could I do?

“‘Very well, Tzar; but the girl is not strong enough to rise and come before your grace.’

“‘That’s nothing, old woman; I’ll go myself and see her.’

“And, would you believe it, the rascal actually went behind the partition. He drew aside the curtain, looked at her with his hawk’s eyes, and nothing more; God helped us. You may believe me when I say the father and I were already prepared to die the death of martyrs. Luckily the little dove did not recognize him. O, Lord God! what have we lived to see! Poor Iván Kouzmitch! who would have thought it! And Vassilissa Igorofna and Iwán Ignatiitch! Why him too? And you, how came it that you were spared? And what do you think of Chvabrine, of Alexy Iványtch? He has cut his hair short, and he is there having a spree with them. He is a sly fox, you’ll agree. And when I spoke of my sick niece, would you believe it, he looked at me as if he would like to run me through with his knife. Still, he did not betray us, and I’m thankful to him for that!”

At this moment up rose the vinous shouts of the guests and the voice of Father Garasim. The guests wanted more wine, and the pope was calling his wife.

“Go home, Petr’ Andréjitch,” she said to me, in great agitation, “I have something else to do than chatter to you. Some ill will befall you if you come across any of them now. Good-bye, Petr’ Andréjitch. What must be, must be; and it may be God will not forsake us.”

The pope’s wife went in; a little relieved, I returned to my quarters. Crossing the square I saw several Bashkirs crowding round the gallows in order to tear off the high boots of the hanged men. With difficulty I forbore showing my anger, which I knew would be wholly useless.

The robbers pervaded the fort, and were plundering the officers’ quarters, and the shouts of the rebels making merry were heard everywhere. I went home. Savéliitch met me on the threshold.

“Thank heaven!” cried he, upon seeing me, “I thought the villains had again laid hold on you. Oh! my father, Petr’ Andréjitch, would you believe it, the robbers have taken everything from us: clothes, linen, crockery and goods; they have left nothing. But what does it matter? Thank God that they have at least left you your life! But oh! my master, did you recognize their ‘*atamán*?’”

“No, I did not recognize him. Who is he?”

“What, my little father, you have already forgotten the drunkard who did you out of your ‘*touloup*’ the day of the snowstorm, a hareskin ‘*touloup*,’ brand new. And he, the rascal, who split all the seams putting it on.”

I was dumbfounded. The likeness of Pugatchéf to my guide was indeed striking. I ended by feeling certain that he and Pugatchéf were one and the same man, and I then understood why he had shown me mercy. I was filled with astonishment at the extraordinary connection of events. A boy’s

"touloup," given to a vagabond, saved my neck from the hangman, and a drunken frequenter of pothouses besieged forts and shook the Empire.

"Will you not eat something?" asked Savéliitch, faithful to his old habits. "There is nothing in the house, it is true; but I shall look about everywhere, and I will get something ready for you."

Left alone, I began to reflect. What could I do? To stay in the fort, which was now in the hands of the robber, or to join his band were courses alike unworthy of an officer. Duty prompted me to go where I could still be useful to my country in the critical circumstances in which it was now situated.

But my love urged me no less strongly to stay by Marya Ivánofna, to be her protector and her champion. Although I foresaw a new and inevitable change in the state of things, yet I could not help trembling as I thought of the dangers of her situation.

My reflections were broken by the arrival of a Cossack, who came running to tell me that the great Tzar summoned me to his presence.

"Where is he?" I asked, hastening to obey.

"In the Commandant's house," replied the Cossack. "After dinner our father went to the bath; now he is resting. Ah, sir! you can see he is a person of importance — he deigned at dinner to eat two roast sucking-pigs; and then he went into the upper part of the vapour-bath, where it was so hot that Tarass Kurotchkin himself could not stand it; he passed the broom to Bikbaieff, and only recovered by dint of cold water. You must agree; his manners are very majestic, and in the bath, they say, he showed his marks of Tzar — on one of his breasts a double-headed eagle as large as a pétak, and on the other his own face."

I did not think it worth while to contradict the Cossack, and I followed him into the Commandant's house, trying to imagine beforehand my interview with Pugatchéf, and to guess how it would end.

The reader will easily believe me when I say that I did not feel wholly reassured.

It was getting dark when I reached the house of the Commandant.

The gallows, with its victims, stood out black and terrible; the body of the Commandant's poor wife still lay beneath the porch, close by two Cossacks, who were on guard.

He who had brought me went in to announce my arrival. He came back almost directly, and ushered me into the room where, the previous evening, I had bidden good-bye to Marya Ivánofna.

I saw a strange scene before me. At a table covered with a cloth and laden with bottles and glasses was seated Pugatchéf, surrounded by ten Cossack chiefs, in high caps and coloured shirts, heated by wine, with flushed faces and sparkling eyes. I did not see among them the new confederates lately sworn in, the traitor Chvabrine and the *"ouriadnik."*

"Ah, ah! so it is you, your lordship," said Pugatchéf, upon seeing me. "You are welcome. All honour to you, and a place at our feast."

The guests made room. I sat down in silence at the end of the table.

My neighbour, a tall and slender young Cossack, with a handsome face, poured me out a bumper of brandy, which I did not touch. I was busy noting the company.

Pugatchéf was seated in the place of honour, his elbows on the table, and resting his black beard on his broad fist. His features, regular and agreeable, wore no fierce expression. He often addressed a man of about fifty years old, calling him sometimes Count, sometimes Timofeitsh, sometimes Uncle.

Each man considered himself as good as his fellow, and none showed any particular deference to their chief. They were talking of the morning's assault, of the success of the revolt, and of their forthcoming operations.

Each man bragged of his prowess, proclaimed his opinions, and freely contradicted Pugatchéf. And it was decided to march upon Orenburg, a bold move, which was nearly crowned with success. The departure was fixed for the day following.

The guests drank yet another bumper, rose from table, and took leave of Pugatchéf. I wished to follow them, but Pugatchéf said —

“Stay there, I wish to speak to you!”

We remained alone together, and for a few moments neither spoke.

Pugatchéf looked sharply at me, winking from time to time his left eye with an indefinable expression of slyness and mockery. At last he gave way to a long burst of laughter, and that with such unfeigned gaiety that I myself, regarding him, began to laugh without knowing why.

“Well, your lordship,” said he, “confess you were afraid when my fellows cast the rope about your neck. I warrant the sky seemed to you the size of a sheepskin. And you would certainly have swung beneath the cross-beam but for your old servant. I knew the old owl again directly. Well, would you ever have thought, sir, that the man who guided you to a lodging in the steppe was the great Tzar himself?” As he said these words he assumed a grave and mysterious air. “You are very guilty as regards me,” resumed he, “but I have pardoned you on account of your courage, and because you did me a good turn when I was obliged to hide from my enemies. But you shall see better things; I will load you with other favours when I shall have recovered my empire. Will you promise to serve me zealously?”

The robber's question and his impudence appeared to be so absurd that I could not restrain a smile.

“Why do you laugh?” he asked, frowning. “Do you not believe me to be the great Tzar? Answer me frankly.”

I did not know what to do. I could not recognize a vagabond as Emperor; such conduct was to me unpardonably base. To call him an impostor to his face was to devote myself to death; and the sacrifice for which I was prepared on the gallows, before all the world, and in the first heat of my indignation, appeared to me a useless piece of bravado. I knew not what to say.

Pugatchéf awaited my reply in fierce silence. At last (and I yet recall that moment with satisfaction) the feeling of duty triumphed in me over human weakness, and I made reply to Pugatchéf —

“Just listen, and I will tell you the whole truth. You shall be judge. Can I recognize in you a Tzar? You are a clever man; you would see directly that I was lying.”

“Who, then, am I, according to you?”

“God alone knows; but whoever you be, you are playing a dangerous game.”

Pugatchéf cast at me a quick, keen glance.

“You do not then think that I am the Tzar Peter? Well, so let it be. Is there no chance of success for the bold? In former times did not Grischka Otrépief reigned? Think of me as you please, but do not leave me. What does it matter to you whether it be one or the other? He who is pope is father. Serve me faithfully, and I will make you a field-marshal and a prince. What do you say to this?”

“No,” I replied, firmly. “I am a gentleman. I have sworn fidelity to Her Majesty the Tzarina; I cannot serve you. If you really wish me well, send me back to Orenburg.”

Pugatchéf reflected.

“But if I send you away,” said he, “will you promise me at least not to bear arms against me?”

“How can you expect me to promise you that?” replied I. “You know yourself that that does not depend upon me. If I be ordered to march against you I must submit. You are a chief now — you wish your subordinates to obey you. How can I refuse to serve if I am wanted? My head is at your disposal; if you let me go free, I thank you; if you cause me to die, may God judge you. Howbeit, I have told you the truth.”

My outspoken candour pleased Pugatchéf.

“E’en so let it be,” said he, clapping me on the shoulder; “either entirely punish or entirely pardon. Go to the four winds and do what seems good in your eyes, but come to-morrow and bid me good-bye; and now begone to bed — I am sleepy myself.”

I left Pugatchéf, and went out into the street. The night was still and cold, the moon and stars, sparkling with all their brightness, lit up the square and the gallows. All was quiet and dark in the rest of the fort. Only in the tavern were lights still to be seen, and from within arose the shouts of the lingering revellers.

I threw a glance at the pope’s house. The doors and the shutters were closed; all seemed perfectly quiet there. I went home and found Savéliitch deploring my absence. The news of my regained liberty overwhelmed him with joy.

“Thanks be to Thee, O Lord!” said he, making the sign of the cross. “We will leave the fort to-morrow at break of day and we will go in God’s care. I have prepared something for you; eat, my father, and sleep till morning quietly, as though in the pocket of Christ!”

I took his advice, and, after having supped with a good appetite, I went to sleep on the bare boards, as weary in mind as in body.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PARTING.

The drum awoke me very early, and I went to the Square. There the troops of Pugatchéf were beginning to gather round the gallows where the victims of the preceding evening still hung. The Cossacks were on horseback, the foot-soldiers with their arms shouldered, their colours flying in the air.

Several cannons, among which I recognized ours, were placed on field-gun carriages. All the inhabitants had assembled in the same place, awaiting the usurper. Before the door of the Commandant's house a Cossack held by the bridle a magnificent white horse of Kirghiz breed. I sought with my eyes the body of the Commandant's wife; it had been pushed aside and covered over with an old bark mat.

At last Pugatchéf came out of the house. All the crowd uncovered. Pugatchéf stopped on the doorstep and said good-morning to everybody. One of the chiefs handed him a bag filled with small pieces of copper, which he began to throw broadcast among the people, who rushed to pick them up, fighting for them with blows.

The principal confederates of Pugatchéf surrounded him. Among them was Chvabrine. Our eyes met; he could read contempt in mine, and he looked away with an expression of deep hatred and pretended mockery. Seeing me in the crowd Pugatchéf beckoned to me and called me up to him.

"Listen," said he, "start this very minute for Orenburg. You will tell the governor and all the generals from me that they may expect me in a week. Advise them to receive me with submission and filial love; if not, they will not escape a terrible punishment. A good journey, to your lordship."

Then turning to the people, he pointed out Chvabrine.

"There, children," said he, "is your new Commandant; obey him in all things; he answers to me for you and the fort."

I heard these words with affright. Chvabrine become master of the place! Marya remained in his power! Good God! what would become of her? Pugatchéf came down the steps, his horse was brought round, he sprang quickly into the saddle, without waiting for the help of the Cossacks prepared to aid him.

At this moment I saw my Savéliitch come out of the crowd, approach Pugatchéf, and present him with a sheet of paper. I could not think what it all meant.

"What is it?" asked Pugatchéf, with dignity.

"Deign to read it, and you will see," replied Savéliitch.

Pugatchéf took the paper and looked at it a long time with an air of importance. At last he said —

"You write very illegibly; our lucid eyes cannot make out anything. Where is our Chief Secretary?"

A youth in a corporal's uniform ran up to Pugatchéf.

“Read it aloud,” the usurper said to him, handing him the paper.

I was extremely curious to know on what account my retainer had thought of writing to Pugatchéf. The Chief Secretary began in a loud voice, spelling out what follows —

“Two dressing gowns, one cotton, the other striped silk, six roubles.”

“What does that mean?” interrupted Pugatchéf, frowning.

“Tell him to read further,” rejoined Savéliitch, quite unmoved.

The Chief Secretary continued to read —

“One uniform of fine green cloth, seven roubles; one pair trousers, white cloth, five roubles; twelve shirts of Holland shirting, with cuffs, ten roubles; one box with tea service, two-and-a-half roubles.”

“What is all this nonsense?” cried Pugatchéf. “What do these tea-boxes and breeches with cuffs matter to me?”

Savéliitch cleared his throat with a cough, and set to work to explain matters.

“Let my father condescend to understand that that is the bill of my master’s goods which have been taken away by the rascals.”

“What rascals?” quoth Pugatchéf, in a fierce and terrible manner.

“Beg pardon, my tongue played me false,” replied Savéliitch. “Rascals, no they are not rascals; but still your fellows have well harried and well robbed, you must agree. Do not get angry; the horse has four legs, and yet he stumbles. Bid him read to the end.”

“Well, let us see, read on,” said Pugatchéf.

The Secretary continued —

“One chintz rug, another of wadded silk, four roubles; one pelisse fox skin lined with red ratteen, forty roubles; and lastly, a small hareskin ‘*touloup*,’ which was left in the hands of your lordship in the wayside house on the steppe, fifteen roubles.”

“What’s that?” cried Pugatchéf, whose eyes suddenly sparkled.

I confess I was in fear for my poor follower. He was about to embark on new explanations when Pugatchéf interrupted him.

“How dare you bother me with such nonsense?” cried he, snatching the paper out of the hands of the Secretary and throwing it in Savéliitch’s face. “Foolish old man, you have been despoiled; well, what does it signify. But, old owl, you should eternally pray God for me and my lads that you and your master do not swing up there with the other rebels. A hareskin ‘*touloup*!’ Hark ye, I’ll have you flayed alive that ‘*touloups*’ may be made of your skin.”

“As it may please you!” replied Savéliitch. “But I am not a free man, and I must answer for my lord’s goods.”

Pugatchéf was apparently in a fit of high-mindedness. He turned aside his head, and went off without another word. Chvabrine and the chiefs followed him. All the band left the fort in order. The people escorted it.

I remained alone in the square with Savéliitch. My follower held in his hand the memorandum, and was contemplating it with an air of deep regret. Seeing my friendly understanding with Pugatchéf, he had thought to turn it

to some account. But his wise hope did not succeed. I was going to scold him sharply for his misplaced zeal, and I could not help laughing.

"Laugh, sir, laugh," said Savéliitch; "but when you are obliged to fit up your household anew, we shall see if you still feel disposed to laugh."

I ran to the pope's house to see Marya Ivánofna. The pope's wife came to meet me with a sad piece of news. During the night high fever had set in, and the poor girl was now delirious. Akoulina Pamphilovna brought me to her room. I gently approached the bed. I was struck by the frightful change in her face. The sick girl did not know me. Motionless before her, it was long ere I understood the words of Father Garasim and his wife, who apparently were trying to comfort me.

Gloomy thoughts overwhelmed me. The position of a poor orphan left solitary and friendless in the power of rascals filled me with fear, while my own powerlessness equally distressed me; but Chvabrine, Chvabrine above all, filled me with alarm. Invested with all power by the usurper, and left master in the fort, with the unhappy girl, the object of his hatred, he was capable of anything. What should I do? How could I help her? How deliver her? Only in one way, and I embraced it. It was to start with all speed for Orenburg, so as to hasten the recapture of Bélogorsk, and to aid in it if possible.

I took leave of the pope and of Akoulina Pamphilovna, recommending warmly to them her whom I already regarded as my wife. I seized the hand of the young girl and covered it with tears and kisses.

"Good-bye," the pope's wife said to me, as she led me away. "Good-bye, Petr' Andréjitch; perhaps we may meet again in happier times. Don't forget us, and write often to us. Except you, poor Marya Ivánofna has no longer stay or comforter."

Out in the Square I stopped a minute before the gallows, which I respectfully saluted, and I then took the road to Orenburg, accompanied by Savéliitch, who did not forsake me.

As I thus went along, deep in thought, I heard all at once a horse galloping behind me. I turned round, and saw a Cossack coming up from the fort, leading a Bashkir horse, and making signs to me from afar to wait for him. I stopped, and soon recognized our "*ouriadnik*."

After joining us at a gallop, he jumped from the back of his own horse, and handing me the bridle of the other —

"Your lordship," said he, "our father makes you a present of a horse, and a pelisse from his own shoulder." On the saddle was slung a plain sheepskin "*touloup*." "And, besides," added he, hesitatingly, "he gives you a half-rouble, but I have lost it by the way; kindly excuse it."

Savéliitch looked askance at him.

"You have lost it by the way," said he, "and pray what is that which jingles in your pocket, barefaced liar that you are?"

"Jingling in my pocket?" replied the "*ouriadnik*," not a whit disconcerted; "God forgive you, old man, 'tis a bridlebit, and never a half rouble."

“Well! well!” said I, putting an end to the dispute. “Thank from me he who sent you: and you may as well try as you go back to find the lost half rouble and keep it for yourself.”

“Many thanks, your lordship,” said he, turning his horse round; “I will pray God for ever for you.”

With these words, he started off at a gallop, keeping one hand on his pocket, and was soon out of sight. I put on the “*touloup*” and mounted the horse, taking up Savéliitch behind me.

“Don’t you see, your lordship,” said the old man, “that it was not in vain that I presented my petition to the robber? The robber was ashamed of himself, although this long and lean Bashkir hoss and this peasant’s ‘*touloup*’ be not worth half what those rascals stole from us, nor what you deigned to give him as a present, still they may be useful to us. ‘From an evil dog be glad of a handful of hairs.’”

CHAPTER X.

THE SIEGE.

As we approached Orenburg we saw a crowd of convicts with cropped heads, and faces disfigured by the pincers of the executioner.

They were working on the fortifications of the place under the pensioners of the garrison. Some were taking away in wheelbarrows the rubbish which filled the ditch; others were hollowing out the earth with spades. Masons were bringing bricks and repairing the walls.

The sentries stopped us at the gates to demand our passports.

When the Sergeant learnt that we came from Fort Bélogorsk he took us direct to the General.

I found him in his garden. He was examining the apple-trees which the breath of autumn had already deprived of their leaves, and, with the help of an old gardener, he was enveloping them in straw. His face expressed calm, good-humour and health.

He seemed very pleased to see me, and began to question me on the terrible events which I had witnessed. I related them.

The old man heard me with attention, and, while listening, cut the dead branches.

“Poor Mironoff!” said he, when I had done my sad story; “‘tis a pity! he was a goot officer! And Matame Mironoff, she was a goot lady and first-rate at pickled mushrooms. And what became of Masha, the Captain’s daughter?”

I replied that she had stayed in the fort, at the pope’s house.

“Aïe! aïe! aïe!” said the General. “That’s bad! very bad; it is quite impossible to count on the discipline of robbers.”

I drew his attention to the fact that Fort Bélogorsk was not very far away, and that probably his excellency would not delay dispatching a detachment of troops to deliver the poor inhabitants.

The General shook his head with an air of indecision —

“We shall see! we shall see!” said he, “we have plenty of time to talk about it. I beg you will come and take tea with me. This evening there will be a council of war; you can give us exact information about that rascal Pugatchéf and his army. Now in the meantime go and rest.”

I went away to the lodging that had been assigned me, and where Savéliitch was already installed. There I impatiently awaited the hour fixed.

The reader may well believe I was anxious not to miss this council of war, which was to have so great an influence on my life. I went at the appointed hour to the General’s, where I found one of the civil officials of Orenburg, the head of the Customs, if I recollect right, a little old man, fat and red-faced, dressed in a coat of watered silk.

He began questioning me on the fate of Iván Kouzmitch, whom he called his gossip, and he often interrupted me by many questions and

sententious remarks, which if they did not show a man versed in the conduct of war, yet showed that he was possessed of natural wit, and of intelligence. During this time the other guests had assembled. When all were seated, and each one had been offered a cup of tea, the General explained lengthily and minutely what was the affair in hand.

“Now, gentlemen, we must decide how we mean to act against the rebels. Shall it be offensively or defensively? Each way has its disadvantages and its advantages. Offensive warfare offers more hope of the enemy being speedily crushed; but a defensive war is surer and less dangerous. Consequently we will collect the votes according to the proper order, that is to say, begin first consulting the juniors in respect of rank. Now, Mr. Ensign,” continued he, addressing me, “be so good as to give us your opinion.”

I rose, and after having depicted in a few words Pugatchéf and his band, I declared that the usurper was not in a state to resist disciplined troops. My opinion was received by the civil officials with visible discontent.

They saw in it the headstrong impertinence of youth.

A murmur arose, and I distinctly heard said, half-aloud, the words, “Beardless boy.” The General turned towards me, and smilingly said —

“Mr. Ensign, the early votes in a council of war are generally for offensive measures. Now we will proceed. Mr. College Counsellor, tell us your opinion?”

The little old man in the watered silk coat made haste to swallow his third cup of tea, which he had mixed with a good help of rum.

“I think, your excellency,” said he, “we must neither act on the defensive nor yet on the offensive.”

“How so, Mr. Counsellor?” replied the General, astounded. “There is nothing else open to us in tactics — one must act either on the defensive or the offensive.”

“Your excellency, endeavour to suborn.”

“Eh! eh! your opinion is very judicious; the act of corruption is one admitted by the rules of war, and we will profit by your counsel. We might offer for the rascal’s head seventy or even a hundred roubles, and take them from the secret funds.”

“And then,” interrupted the head of the Customs, “I’m a Kirghiz instead of a College Counsellor if these robbers do not deliver up their atáman, chained hand and foot.”

“We will think of it, and talk of it again,” rejoined the General. “Still, in any case, we must also take military measures. Gentlemen, give your votes in proper order.”

Everyone’s opinion was contrary to mine. Those present vied with each other about the untrustworthiness of the troops, the uncertainty of success, the necessity of prudence, and so forth. All were of opinion that it was better to stay behind a strong wall, their safety assured by cannon, than to tempt the fortune of war in the open field.

At last, when all the opinions had been given, the General shook the ashes out of his pipe and made the following speech: —

“Gentlemen, I must tell you, for my part, I am entirely of the opinion of our friend the ensign, for this opinion is based on the precepts of good tactics, in which nearly always offensive movements are preferable to defensive ones.” Here he paused a moment and filled his pipe. My self-love was triumphant, and I cast a proud glance at the civil officials who were whispering among themselves, with an air of disquiet and discontent. “But, gentlemen,” resumed the General, with a sigh, and puffing out a cloud of smoke, “I dare not take upon myself such a great responsibility, when the safety is in question of the provinces entrusted to my care by Her Imperial Majesty, my gracious Sovereign. Therefore I see I am obliged to abide by the advice of the majority, which has ruled that prudence as well as reason declares that we should await in the town the siege which threatens us, and that we should defeat the attacks of the enemy by the force of artillery, and, if the possibility present itself, by well-directed sorties.”

It was now the turn of the officials to look mockingly at me. The council broke up. I could not help deploring the weakness of the honest soldier who, against his own judgment, had decided to abide by the counsel of ignorant and inexperienced people.

Several days after this memorable council of war, Pugatchéf, true to his word, approached Orenburg. From the top of the city wall I took note of the army of the rebels, and it seemed to me that their number had increased tenfold since the last assault I had witnessed. They had also artillery, which had been taken from the little forts which had fallen before Pugatchéf. As I recollected the decision of the council of war, I foresaw a long imprisonment within the walls of Orenburg, and I was ready to cry with vexation.

Far be from me any intention of describing the siege of Orenburg, which belongs to history, and not to a family memoir. In a few words, therefore, I shall say that in consequence of the bad arrangements of the authorities, the siege was disastrous for the inhabitants, who were forced to suffer hunger and privation of all kinds. Life at Orenburg was becoming unendurable; each one awaited in anxiety the fate that should befall him. All complained of the famine, which was, indeed, awful.

The inhabitants ended by becoming accustomed to the shells falling on their houses. Even the assaults of Pugatchéf no longer excited great disturbance. I was dying of ennui. The time passed but slowly. I could not get any letter from Bélogorsk, for all the roads were blocked, and the separation from Marya became unbearable. My only occupation consisted in my military rounds.

Thanks to Pugatchéf, I had a pretty good horse, with which I shared my scanty rations. Every day I passed beyond the ramparts, and I went and fired away against the scouts of Pugatchéf. In these sort of skirmishes the rebels generally got the better of us, as they had plenty of food and were capitally mounted.

Our thin, starved cavalry was unable to stand against them. Sometimes our famished infantry took the field, but the depth of the snow prevented action with any success against the flying cavalry of the enemy. The artillery thundered vainly from the height of the ramparts, and in the field guns could not work because of the weakness of the worn-out horses. This is how we made war, and this is what the officials of Orenburg called prudence and foresight.

One day, when we had succeeded in dispersing and driving before us a rather numerous band, I came up with one of the hindmost Cossacks, and I was about to strike him with my Turkish sabre when he took off his cap and cried —

“Good day, Petr’ Andréjitch; how is your health?”

I recognized our “*ouriadnik*.” I cannot say how glad I was to see him.

“Good day, Maximitch,” said I, “is it long since you left Bélogorsk?”

“No, not long, my little father, Petr’ Andréjitch; I only came back yesterday. I have a letter for you.”

“Where is it?” I cried, overjoyed.

“I have got it,” rejoined Maximitch, putting his hand into his breast.

“I promised Palashka to give it to you.”

He handed me a folded paper, and immediately darted off at full gallop. I opened it and read with emotion the following lines —

“It has pleased God to deprive me at once of my father and my mother. I have no longer on earth either parents or protectors. I have recourse to you, because I know you have always wished me well, and also that you are ever ready to help those in need. I pray God this letter may reach you. Maximitch has promised me he will ensure it reaching you. Palashka has also heard Maximitch say that he often sees you from afar in the sorties, and that you do not take care of yourself, nor think of those who pray God for you with tears.

“I was long ill, and when at last I recovered, Alexey Iványtch, who commands here in the room of my late father, forced Father Garasim to hand me over to him by threatening him with Pugatchéf. I live under his guardianship in our house. Alexey Iványtch tries to oblige me to marry him. He avers that he saved my life by not exposing Akoulina Pamphilovna’s stratagem when she spoke of me to the robbers as her niece, but it would be easier to me to die than to become the wife of a man like Chvabrine. He treats me with great cruelty, and threatens, if I do not change my mind, to bring me to the robber camp, where I should suffer the fate of Elizabeth Kharloff.

“I have begged Alexey Iványtch to give me some time to think it over. He has given me three days; if at the end of that time I do not become his wife I need expect no more consideration at his hands. Oh! my father, Petr’ Andréjitch, you are my only stay. Defend me, a poor girl. Beg the General and all your superiors to send us help as soon as possible, and come yourself if you can.

“I remain, your submissive orphan,

“MARYA MIRONOFF.”

I almost went mad when I read this letter. I rushed to the town, spurring without pity my poor horse. During the ride I turned over in my mind a thousand projects for rescuing the poor girl without being able to decide on any. Arrived in the town I went straight to the General's, and I actually ran into his room. He was walking up and down, smoking his meerschaum pipe. Upon seeing me he stood still; my appearance doubtless struck him, for he questioned me with a kind of anxiety on the cause of my abrupt entry.

“Your excellency,” said I, “I come to you as I would to my poor father. Do not reject my request; the happiness of my whole life is in question.”

“What is all this, my father?” asked the astounded General. “What can I do for you? Speak.”

“Your excellency, allow me to take a battalion of soldiers and fifty Cossacks, and go and clear out Fort Bélogorsk.”

The General stared, thinking, probably, that I was out of my senses; and he was not far wrong.

“How? What! what! Clear out Fort Bélogorsk!” he said at last.

“I'll answer for success!” I rejoined, hotly. “Only let me go.”

“No, young man,” he said, shaking his head; “it is so far away. The enemy would easily block all communication with the principal strategic point, which would quickly enable him to defeat you utterly and decisively. A blocked communication, do you see?”

* * * * *

I took fright when I saw he was getting involved in a military dissertation, and I made haste to interrupt him.

“The daughter of Captain Mironoff,” I said, “has just written me a letter asking for help. Chvabrine is obliging her to become his wife.”

“Indeed! Oh! this Chvabrine is a great rascal. If he falls into my hands I'll have him tried in twenty-four hours, and we will shoot him on the glacis of the fort. But in the meantime we must have patience.”

“Have patience!” I cried, beside myself. “Between this and then he will ill-treat Marya.”

“Oh!” replied the General. “Still that would not be such a terrible misfortune for her. It would be better for her to be the wife of Chvabrine, who can now protect her. And when we shall have shot him, then, with heaven's help, the betrothed will come together again. Pretty little widows do not long remain single; I mean to say a widow more easily finds a husband.”

“I'd rather die,” I cried, furiously, “than leave her to Chvabrine.”

“Ah! Bah!” said the old man, “I understand now. Probably you are in love with Marya Ivánofna. Then it is another thing. Poor boy! But still it is not possible for me to give you a battalion and fifty Cossacks. This expedition is unreasonable, and I cannot take it upon my own responsibility.”

I bowed my head; despair overwhelmed me. All at once an idea flashed across me, and what it was the reader will see in the next chapter, as the old novelists used to say.

CHAPTER XI.

THE REBEL CAMP.

I left the General and made haste to return home.

Savéliitch greeted me with his usual remonstrances —

“What pleasure can you find, sir, in fighting with these drunken robbers? Is it the business of a *‘boyár?’* The stars are not always propitious, and you will only get killed for naught. Now if you were making war with Turks or Swedes! But I’m ashamed even to talk of these fellows with whom you are fighting.”

I interrupted his speech.

“How much money have I in all?”

“Quite enough,” replied he, with a complacent and satisfied air. “It was all very well for the rascals to hunt everywhere, but I over-reached them.”

Thus saying he drew from his pocket a long knitted purse, all full of silver pieces.

“Very well, Savéliitch,” said I. “Give me half what you have there, and keep the rest for yourself. I am about to start for Fort Bélogorsk.”

“Oh! my father, Petr’ Andréjitch,” cried my good follower, in a tremulous voice; “do you not fear God? How do you mean to travel now that all the roads be blocked by the robbers? At least, take pity on your parents if you have none on yourself. Where do you wish to go? Wherefore? Wait a bit, the troops will come and take all the robbers. Then you can go to the four winds.”

My resolution was fixed.

“It is too late to reflect,” I said to the old man. “I must go; it is impossible for me not to go. Do not make yourself wretched, Savéliitch. God is good; we shall perhaps meet again. Mind you be not ashamed to spend my money; do not be a miser. Buy all you have need of, even if you pay three times the value of things. I make you a present of the money if in three days’ time I be not back.”

“What’s that you’re saying, sir?” broke in Savéliitch; “that I shall consent to let you go alone? Why, don’t dream of asking me to do so. If you have resolved to go I will e’en go along with you, were it on foot; but I will not forsake you. That I should stay snugly behind a stone wall! Why, I should be mad! Do as you please, sir, but I do not leave you.”

I well knew it was not possible to contradict Savéliitch, and I allowed him to make ready for our departure.

In half-an-hour I was in the saddle on my horse, and Savéliitch on a thin and lame “*garron*,” which a townsman had given him for nothing, having no longer anything wherewith to feed it. We gained the town gates; the sentries let us pass, and at last we were out of Orenburg.

Night was beginning to fall. The road I had to follow passed before the little village of Berd, held by Pugatchéf. This road was deep in snow, and

nearly hidden; but across the steppe were to be seen tracks of horses each day renewed.

I was trotting. Savéliitch could hardly keep up with me, and cried to me every minute —

“Not so fast, sir, in heaven’s name not so fast! My confounded ‘*garron*’ cannot catch up your long-legged devil. Why are you in such a hurry? Are we bound to a feast? Rather have we our necks under the axe. Petr’ Andréjitch! Oh! my father, Petr’ Andréjitch! Oh, Lord! this ‘*boyár’s*’ child will die, and all for nothing!”

We soon saw twinkling the fires of Berd. We were approaching the deep ravines which served as natural fortifications to the little settlement. Savéliitch, though keeping up to me tolerably well, did not give over his lamentable supplications. I was hoping to pass safely by this unfriendly place, when all at once I made out in the dark five peasants, armed with big sticks.

It was an advance guard of Pugatchéf’s camp. They shouted to us —

“Who goes there?”

Not knowing the pass-word, I wanted to pass them without reply, but in the same moment they surrounded me, and one of them seized my horse by the bridle. I drew my sword, and struck the peasant on the head. His high cap saved his life; still, he staggered, and let go the bridle. The others were frightened, and jumped aside. Taking advantage of their scare, I put spurs to my horse, and dashed off at full gallop.

The fast increasing darkness of the night might have saved me from any more difficulties, when, looking back, I discovered that Savéliitch was no longer with me. The poor old man with his lame horse had not been able to shake off the robbers. What was I to do?

After waiting a few minutes and becoming certain he had been stopped, I turned my horse’s head to go to his help. As I approached the ravine I heard from afar confused shouts, and the voice of my Savéliitch. Quickening my pace, I soon came up with the peasants of the advance guard who had stopped me a few minutes previously. They had surrounded Savéliitch, and had obliged the poor old man to get off his horse, and were making ready to bind him.

The sight of me filled them with joy. They rushed upon me with shouts, and in a moment I was off my horse. One of them, who appeared to be the leader, told me they were going to take me before the Tzar.

“And our father,” added he, “will decide whether you are to be hung at once or if we are to wait for God’s sunshine!”

I offered no resistance. Savéliitch followed my example, and the sentries led us away in triumph.

We crossed the ravine to enter the settlement. All the peasants’ houses were lit up. All around arose shouts and noise. I met a crowd of people in the street, but no one paid any attention to us, or recognized in me an officer of Orenburg. We were taken to a “*izbá*,” built in the angle of two streets. Near the door were several barrels of wine and two cannons.

“Here is the palace!” said one of the peasants; “we will go and announce you.”

He entered the “*izbá*.” I glanced at Savéliitch; the old man was making the sign of the cross, and muttering prayers. We waited a long time. At last the peasant reappeared, and said to me —

“Come, our father has given orders that the officer be brought in.”

I entered the “*izbá*,” or the palace, as the peasant called it. It was lighted by two tallow candles, and the walls were hung with gold paper. All the rest of the furniture, the benches, the table, the little washstand jug hung to a cord, the towel on a nail, the oven fork standing up in a corner, the wooden shelf laden with earthen pots, all was just as in any other “*izbá*.” Pugatchéf sat beneath the holy pictures in a red caftan and high cap, his hand on his thigh. Around him stood several of his principal chiefs, with a forced expression of submission and respect. It was easy to see that the news of the arrival of an officer from Orenburg had aroused a great curiosity among the rebels, and that they were prepared to receive me in pomp. Pugatchéf recognized me at the first glance. His feigned gravity disappeared at once.

“Ah! it is your lordship,” said he, with liveliness. “How are you? What in heaven’s name brings you here?”

I replied that I had started on a journey on my own business, and that his people had stopped me.

“And on what business?” asked he.

I knew not what to say. Pugatchéf, thinking I did not want to explain myself before witnesses, made a sign to his comrades to go away. All obeyed except two, who did not offer to stir.

“Speak boldly before these,” said Pugatchéf; “hide nothing from them.”

I threw a side glance upon these two confederates of the usurper. One of them, a little old man, meagre and bent, with a scanty grey beard, had nothing remarkable about him, except a broad blue ribbon worn cross-ways over his caftan of thick grey cloth. But I shall never forget his companion. He was tall, powerfully built, and appeared to be about forty-five. A thick red beard, piercing grey eyes, a nose without nostrils, and marks of the hot iron on his forehead and on his cheeks, gave to his broad face, seamed with small-pox, a strange and indefinable expression. He wore a red shirt, a Kirghiz dress, and wide Cossack trousers. The first, as I afterwards learnt, was the deserter, Corporal Béloborodoff. The other, Athanasius Sokoloff, nicknamed Khlopúsha, was a criminal condemned to the mines of Siberia, whence he had escaped three times. In spite of the feelings which then agitated me, this company wherein I was thus unexpectedly thrown greatly impressed me. But Pugatchéf soon recalled me to myself by his question.

“Speak! On what business did you leave Orenburg?”

A strange idea occurred to me. It seemed to me that Providence, in bringing me a second time before Pugatchéf, opened to me a way of executing my project. I resolved to seize the opportunity, and, without considering any longer what course I should pursue, I replied to Pugatchéf

"I was going to Fort Bélogorsk, to deliver there an orphan who is being oppressed."

Pugatchéf's eyes flashed.

"Who among my people would dare to harm an orphan?" cried he. "Were he ever so brazen-faced, he should never escape my vengeance! Speak, who is the guilty one?"

"Chvabrine," replied I; "he keeps in durance the same young girl whom you saw with the priest's wife, and he wants to force her to become his wife."

"I'll give him a lesson, Master Chvabrine!" cried Pugatchéf, with a fierce air. "He shall learn what it is to do as he pleases under me, and to oppress my people. I'll hang him."

"Bid me speak a word," broke in Khlopúsha, in a hoarse voice. "You were too hasty in giving Chvabrine command of the fort, and now you are too hasty in hanging him. You have already offended the Cossacks by giving them a gentleman as leader — do not, therefore, now affront the gentlemen by executing them on the first accusation."

"They need neither be overwhelmed with favours nor be pitied," the little old man with the blue ribbon now said, in his turn. "There would be no harm in hanging Chvabrine, neither would there be any harm in cross-examining this officer. Why has he deigned to pay us a visit? If he do not recognize you as Tzar, he needs not to ask justice of you; if, on the other hand, he do recognize you, wherefore, then, has he stayed in Orenburg until now, in the midst of your enemies. Will you order that he be tried by fire? It would appear that his lordship is sent to us by the Generals in Orenburg."

The logic of the old rascal appeared plausible even to me. An involuntary shudder thrilled through me as I remembered in whose hands I was.

Pugatchéf saw my disquiet.

"Eh, eh! your lordship," said he, winking, "it appears to me my field-marshal is right. What do you think of it?"

The banter of Pugatchéf in some measure restored me to myself.

I quietly replied that I was in his power, and that he could do with me as he listed.

"Very well," said Pugatchéf; "now tell me in what state is your town?"

"Thank God," replied I, "all is in good order."

"In good order!" repeated Pugatchéf, "and the people are dying of hunger there."

The usurper spoke truth; but, according to the duty imposed on me by my oath, I assured him it was a false report, and that Orenburg was amply victualled.

"You see," cried the little old man, "that he is deceiving you. All the deserters are unanimous in declaring famine and plague are in Orenburg, that they are eating carrion there as a dish of honour. And his lordship assures us there is abundance of all. If you wish to hang Chvabrine, hang on the same gallows this lad, so that they need have naught wherewith to

reproach each other.”

The words of the confounded old man seemed to have shaken Pugatchéf.

Happily, Khlopúsha began to contradict his companion.

“Hold your tongue, Naúmitch,” said he; “you only think of hanging and strangling. It certainly suits you well to play the hero. Already you have one foot in the grave, and you want to kill others. Have you not enough blood on your conscience?”

“But are you a saint yourself?” retorted Béloborodoff. “Wherefore, then, this pity?”

“Without doubt,” replied Khlopúsha, “I am also a sinner, and this hand” (he closed his bony fist, and turning back his sleeve displayed his hairy arm), “and this hand is guilty of having shed Christian blood. But I killed my enemy, and not my host, on the free highway and in the dark wood, but not in the house, and behind the stove with axe and club, neither with old women’s gossip.”

The old man averted his head, and muttered between his teeth —

“Branded!”

“What are you muttering there, old owl?” rejoined Khlopúsha. “I’ll brand you! Wait a bit, your turn will come. By heaven, I hope some day you may smell the hot pincers, and till then have a care that I do not tear out your ugly beard.”

“Gentlemen,” said Pugatchéf, with dignity, “stop quarrelling. It would not be a great misfortune if all the mangy curs of Orenburg dangled their legs beneath the same cross-bar, but it would be a pity if our good dogs took to biting each other.”

Khlopúsha and Béloborodoff said nothing, and exchanged black looks.

I felt it was necessary to change the subject of the interview, which might end in a very disagreeable manner for me. Turning toward Pugatchéf, I said to him, smiling —

“Ah! I had forgotten to thank you for your horse and ‘*touloup*.’ Had it not been for you, I should never have reached the town, for I should have died of cold on the journey.”

My stratagem succeeded. Pugatchéf became good-humoured.

“The beauty of a debt is the payment!” said he, with his usual wink. “Now, tell me the whole story. What have you to do with this young girl whom Chvabrine is persecuting? Has she not hooked your young affections, eh?”

“She is my betrothed,” I replied, as I observed the favourable change taking place in Pugatchéf, and seeing no risk in telling him the truth.

“Your betrothed!” cried Pugatchéf. “Why didn’t you tell me before? We will marry you, and have a fine junket at your wedding.” Then, turning to Béloborodoff, “Listen, field-marshal,” said he, “we are old friends, his lordship and me; let us sit down to supper. To-morrow we will see what is to be done with him; one’s brains are clearer in the morning than by night.”

I should willingly have refused the proposed honour, but I could not get out of it. Two young Cossack girls, children of the master of the “*izbá*,” laid

the table with a white cloth, brought bread, fish, soup, and big jugs of wine and beer.

Thus for the second time I found myself at the table of Pugatchéf and his terrible companions. The orgy of which I became the involuntary witness went on till far into the night.

At last drunkenness overcame the guests; Pugatchéf fell asleep in his place, and his companions rose, making me a sign to leave him.

I went out with them. By the order of Khlopúsha the sentry took me to the lockup, where I found Savéliitch, and I was left alone with him under lock and key.

My retainer was so astounded by the turn affairs had taken that he did not address a single question to me. He lay down in the dark, and for a long while I heard him moan and lament. At last, however, he began to snore, and as for me, I gave myself up to thoughts which did not allow me to close my eyes for a moment all night.

On the morrow morning Pugatchéf sent someone to call me.

I went to his house. Before his door stood a "*kibitka*" with three Tartar horses. The crowd filled the street. Pugatchéf, whom I met in the ante-room, was dressed in a travelling suit, a pelisse and Kirghiz cap. His guests of yesterday evening surrounded him, and wore a submissive air, which contrasted strongly with what I had witnessed the previous evening.

Pugatchéf gaily bid me "good morning," and ordered me to seat myself beside him in the "*kibitka*." We took our places.

"To Fort Bélogorsk!" said Pugatchéf to the robust Tartar driver, who standing guided the team. My heart beat violently.

The horses dashed forward, the little bell tinkled, the "*kibitka*," bounded across the snow.

"Stop! stop!" cried a voice which I knew but too well; and I saw Savéliitch running towards us. Pugatchéf bid the man stop.

"Oh! my father, Petr' Andréjitch," cried my follower, "don't forsake me in my old age among the rob —"

"Aha! old owl!" said Pugatchéf, "so God again brings us together. Here, seat yourself in front."

"Thanks, Tzar, thanks my own father," replied Savéliitch, taking his seat. "May God give you a hundred years of life for having reassured a poor old man. I shall pray God all my life for you, and I'll never talk about the hareskin '*touloup*.'"

This hareskin "*touloup*" might end at last by making Pugatchéf seriously angry. But the usurper either did not hear or pretended not to hear this ill-judged remark. The horses again galloped.

The people stopped in the street, and each one saluted us, bowing low. Pugatchéf bent his head right and left.

In a moment we were out of the village and were taking our course over a well-marked road. What I felt may be easily imagined. In a few hours I should see again her whom I had thought lost to me for ever. I imagined to myself the moment of our reunion, but I also thought of the man in whose

hands lay my destiny, and whom a strange concourse of events bound to me by a mysterious link.

I recalled the rough cruelty and bloody habits of him who was disposed to prove the defender of my love. Pugatchéf did not know she was the daughter of Captain Mironoff; Chvabrine, driven to bay, was capable of telling him all, and Pugatchéf might learn the truth in other ways. Then, what would become of Marya? At this thought a shudder ran through my body, and my hair seemed to stand on end.

All at once Pugatchéf broke upon my reflections.

"What does your lordship," said he, "deign to think about?"

"How can you expect me to be thinking?" replied I. "I am an officer and a gentleman; but yesterday I was waging war with you, and now I am travelling with you in the same carriage, and the whole happiness of my life depends on you."

"What," said Pugatchéf, "are you afraid?"

I made reply that having already received my life at his hands, I trusted not merely in his good nature but in his help.

"And you are right — 'fore God, you are right," resumed the usurper; "you saw that my merry men looked askance at you. Even to-day the little old man wanted to prove indubitably to me that you were a spy, and should be put to the torture and hung. But I would not agree," added he, lowering his voice, lest Savéliitch and the Tartar should hear him, "because I bore in mind your glass of wine and your *touloup*.' You see clearly that I am not bloodthirsty, as your comrades would make out."

Remembering the taking of Fort Bélogorsk, I did not think wise to contradict him, and I said nothing.

"What do they say of me in Orenburg?" asked Pugatchéf, after a short silence.

"Well, it is said that you are not easy to get the better of. You will agree we have had our hands full with you."

The face of the usurper expressed the satisfaction of self-love.

"Yes," said he, with a glorious air, "I am a great warrior. Do they know in Orenburg of the battle of Jouzeïff? Forty Generals were killed, four armies made prisoners. Do you think the King of Prussia is about my strength?"

This boasting of the robber rather amused me.

"What do you think yourself?" I said to him. "Could you beat Frederick?"

"Fédor Fédorovitch, eh! why not? I can beat your Generals, and your Generals have beaten him. Until now my arms have been victorious. Wait a bit — only wait a bit — you'll see something when I shall march on Moscow?"

"And you are thinking of marching on Moscow?"

The usurper appeared to reflect. Then he said, half-aloud —

"God knows my way is straight. I have little freedom of action. My fellows don't obey me — they are marauders. I have to keep a sharp look

out — at the first reverse they would save their necks with my head.”

“Well,” I said to Pugatchéf, “would it not be better to forsake them yourself, ere it be too late, and throw yourself on the mercy of the Tzarina?”

Pugatchéf smiled bitterly.

“No,” said he, “the day of repentance is past and gone; they will not give me grace. I must go on as I have begun. Who knows? It may be. Grischka Otrépieff certainly became Tzar at Moscow.”

“But do you know his end? He was cast out of a window, he was massacred, burnt, and his ashes blown abroad at the cannon’s mouth, to the four winds of heaven.”

The Tartar began to hum a plaintive song; Savéliitch, fast asleep, oscillated from one side to the other. Our “*kibitka*” was passing quickly over the wintry road. All at once I saw a little village I knew well, with a palisade and a belfry, on the rugged bank of the Yaïk. A quarter of an hour afterwards we were entering Fort Bélogorsk.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ORPHAN.

The "*kibitka*" stopped before the door of the Commandant's house. The inhabitants had recognized the little bell of Pugatchéf's team, and had assembled in a crowd. Chvabrine came to meet the usurper; he was dressed as a Cossack, and had allowed his beard to grow.

The traitor helped Pugatchéf to get out of the carriage, expressing by obsequious words his zeal and joy.

Seeing me he became uneasy, but soon recovered himself.

"You are one of us," said he; "it should have been long ago."

I turned away my head without answering him. My heart failed me when we entered the little room I knew so well, where could still be seen on the wall the commission of the late deceased Commandant, as a sad memorial.

Pugatchéf sat down on the same sofa where oftentimes Iván Kouzmitch had dozed to the sound of his wife's scolding.

Chvabrine himself brought brandy to his chief. Pugatchéf drank a glass of it, and said to him, pointing to me —

"Offer one to his lordship."

Chvabrine approached me with his tray. I turned away my head for the second time. He seemed beside himself. With his usual sharpness he had doubtless guessed that Pugatchéf was not pleased with me. He regarded him with alarm and me with mistrust. Pugatchéf asked him some questions on the condition of the fort, on what was said concerning the Tzarina's troops, and other similar subjects. Then suddenly and in an unexpected manner —

"Tell me, brother," asked he, "who is this young girl you are keeping under watch and ward? Show me her."

Chvabrine became pale as death.

"Tzar," he said, in a trembling voice, "Tzar, she is not under restraint; she is in bed in her room."

"Take me to her," said the usurper, rising.

It was impossible to hesitate. Chvabrine led Pugatchéf to Marya Ivánofna's room. I followed them. Chvabrine stopped on the stairs.

"Tzar," said he, "you can constrain me to do as you list, but do not permit a stranger to enter my wife's room."

"You are married!" cried I, ready to tear him in pieces.

"Hush!" interrupted Pugatchéf, "it is my concern. And you," continued he, turning towards Chvabrine, "do not swagger; whether she be your wife or no, I take whomsoever I please to see her. Your lordship, follow me."

At the door of the room Chvabrine again stopped, and said, in a broken voice —

"Tzar, I warn you she is feverish, and for three days she has been delirious."

“Open!” said Pugatchéf.

Chvabrine began to fumble in his pockets, and ended by declaring he had forgotten the key.

Pugatchéf gave a push to the door with his foot, the lock gave way, the door opened, and we went in. I cast a rapid glance round the room and nearly fainted. Upon the floor, in a coarse peasant’s dress, sat Marya, pale and thin, with her hair unbound. Before her stood a jug of water and a bit of bread. At the sight of me she trembled and gave a piercing cry. I cannot say what I felt. Pugatchéf looked sidelong at Chvabrine, and said to him with a bitter smile —

“Your hospital is well-ordered!” Then, approaching Marya, “Tell me, my little dove, why your husband punishes you thus?”

“My husband!” rejoined she; “he is not my husband. Never will I be his wife. I am resolved rather to die, and I shall die if I be not delivered.”

Pugatchéf cast a furious glance upon Chvabrine.

“You dared deceive me,” cried he. “Do you know, villain, what you deserve?”

Chvabrine dropped on his knees. Then contempt overpowered in me all feelings of hatred and revenge. I looked with disgust upon a gentleman at the feet of a Cossack deserter. Pugatchéf allowed himself to be moved.

“I pardon you this time,” he said, to Chvabrine; “but next offence I will remember this one.” Then, addressing Marya, he said to her, gently, “Come out, pretty one; I give you your liberty. I am the Tzar.”

Marya Ivánofna threw a quick look at him, and divined that the murderer of her parents was before her eyes. She covered her face with her hands, and fell unconscious.

I was rushing to help her, when my old acquaintance, Polashka, came very boldly into the room, and took charge of her mistress.

Pugatchéf withdrew, and we all three returned to the parlour.

“Well, your lordship,” Pugatchéf said to me, laughing, “we have delivered the pretty girl; what do you say to it? Ought we not to send for the pope and get him to marry his niece? If you like I will be your *marriage godfather*, Chvabrine best man; then we will set to and drink with closed doors.”

What I feared came to pass.

No sooner had he heard Pugatchéf’s proposal than Chvabrine lost his head.

“Tzar,” said he, furiously, “I am guilty, I have lied to you; but Grineff also deceives you. This young girl is not the pope’s niece; she is the daughter of Iván Mironoff, who was executed when the fort was taken.”

Pugatchéf turned his flashing eyes on me.

“What does all this mean?” cried he, with indignant surprise.

But I made answer boldly —

“Chvabrine has told you the truth.”

“You had not told me that,” rejoined Pugatchéf, whose brow had suddenly darkened.

"But judge yourself," replied I; "could I declare before all your people that she was Mironoff's daughter? They would have torn her in pieces, nothing could have saved her."

"Well, you are right," said Pugatchéf. "My drunkards would not have spared the poor girl; my gossip, the pope's wife, did right to deceive them."

"Listen," I resumed, seeing how well disposed he was towards me, "I do not know what to call you, nor do I seek to know. But God knows I stand ready to give my life for what you have done for me. Only do not ask of me anything opposed to my honour and my conscience as a Christian. You are my benefactor; end as you have begun. Let me go with the poor orphan whither God shall direct, and whatever befall and wherever you be we will pray God every day that He watch over the safety of your soul."

I seemed to have touched Pugatchéf's fierce heart.

"Be it even as you wish," said he. "Either entirely punish or entirely pardon; that is my motto. Take your pretty one, take her away wherever you like, and may God grant you love and wisdom."

He turned towards Chvabrine, and bid him write me a safe conduct pass for all the gates and forts under his command. Chvabrine remained still, and as if petrified.

Pugatchéf went to inspect the fort; Chvabrine followed him, and I stayed behind under the pretext of packing up. I ran to Marya's room. The door was shut; I knocked.

"Who is there?" asked Polashka.

I gave my name. Marya's gentle voice was then heard through the door.

"Wait, Petr' Andréjitch," said she, "I am changing my dress. Go to Akoulina Pamphilovna's; I shall be there in a minute."

I obeyed and went to Father Garasim's house.

The pope and his wife hastened to meet me. Savéliitch had already told them all that had happened.

"Good-day, Petr' Andréjitch," the pope's wife said to me; "here has God so ruled that we meet again. How are you? We have talked about you every day. And Marya Ivánofna, what has she not suffered anent you, my pigeon? But tell me, my father, how did you get out of the difficulty with Pugatchéf? How was it that he did not kill you? Well, for *that*, thanks be to the villain."

"There, hush, old woman," interrupted Father Garasim; "don't gossip about all you know; too much talk, no salvation. Come in, Petr' Andréjitch, and welcome. It is long since we have seen each other."

The pope's wife did me honour with everything she had at hand, without ceasing a moment to talk.

She told me how Chvabrine had obliged them to deliver up Marya Ivánofna to him; how the poor girl cried, and would not be parted from them; how she had had continual intercourse with them through the medium of Polashka, a resolute, sharp girl who made the "*ouriadnik*" himself dance (as they say) to the sound of her flageolet; how she had counselled Marya Ivánofna to write me a letter, etc. As for me, in a few

words I told my story.

The pope and his wife crossed themselves when they heard that Pugatchéf was aware they had deceived him.

"May the power of the cross be with us!" Akoulina Pamphilovna said. "May God turn aside this cloud. Very well, Alexey Iványtch, we shall see! Oh! the sly fox!"

At this moment the door opened, and Marya Ivánofna appeared, with a smile on her pale face. She had changed her peasant dress, and was dressed as usual, simply and suitably. I seized her hand, and could not for a while say a single word. We were both silent, our hearts were too full.

Our hosts felt we had other things to do than to talk to them; they left us. We remained alone. Marya told me all that had befallen her since the taking of the fort; painted me the horrors of her position, all the torment the infamous Chvabrine had made her suffer. We recalled to each other the happy past, both of us shedding tears the while.

At last I could tell her my plans. It was impossible for her to stay in a fort which had submitted to Pugatchéf, and where Chvabrine was in command. Neither could I dream of taking refuge with her in Orenburg, where at this juncture all the miseries of a siege were being undergone. Marya had no longer a single relation in the world. Therefore I proposed to her that she should go to my parents' country house.

She was very much surprised at such a proposal. The displeasure my father had shown on her account frightened her. But I soothed her. I knew my father would deem it a duty and an honour to shelter in his house the daughter of a veteran who had died for his country.

"Dear Marya," I said, at last, "I look upon you as my wife. These strange events have irrevocably united us. Nothing in the whole world can part us any more."

Marya heard me in dignified silence, without misplaced affectation. She felt as I did, that her destiny was irrevocably linked with mine; still, she repeated that she would only be my wife with my parents' consent. I had nothing to answer. We fell in each other's arms, and my project became our mutual decision.

An hour afterwards the "*ouriadnik*" brought me my safe-conduct pass, with the scrawl which did duty as Pugatchéf's signature, and told me the Tzar awaited me in his house.

I found him ready to start.

How express what I felt in the presence of this man, awful and cruel for all, myself only excepted? And why not tell the whole truth? At this moment I felt a strong sympathy with him. I wished earnestly to draw him from the band of robbers of which he was the chief, and save his head ere it should be too late.

The presence of Chvabrine and of the crowd around us prevented me from expressing to him all the feelings which filled my heart.

We parted friends.

Pugatchéf saw in the crowd Akoulina Pamphilovna, and amicably threatened her with his finger, with a meaning wink. Then he seated himself in his "*kibitka*" and gave the word to return to Berd. When the horses started, he leaned out of his carriage and shouted to me —

"Farewell, your lordship; it may be we shall yet meet again!"

We did, indeed, see one another once again; but under what circumstances!

Pugatchéf was gone.

I long watched the steppe over which his "*kibitka*" was rapidly gliding.

The crowd dwindled away; Chvabrine disappeared. I went back to the pope's house, where all was being made ready for our departure. Our little luggage had been put in the old vehicle of the Commandant. In a moment the horses were harnessed.

Marya went to bid a last farewell to the tomb of her parents, buried behind the church.

I wished to escort her there, but she begged me to let her go alone, and soon came back, weeping quiet tears.

Father Garasim and his wife came to the door to see us off. We took our seats, three abreast, inside the "*kibitka*," and Savéliitch again perched in front.

"Good-bye, Marya Ivánofna, our dear dove; good-bye, Petr' Andréjitch, our gay goshawk!" the pope's wife cried to us. "A lucky journey to you, and may God give you abundant happiness!"

We started. At the Commandant's window I saw Chvabrine standing, with a face of dark hatred.

I did not wish to triumph meanly over a humbled enemy, and looked away from him.

At last we passed the principal gate, and for ever left Fort Bélogorsk.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ARREST.

Reunited in so marvellous a manner to the young girl who, that very morning even, had caused me so much unhappy disquiet, I could not believe in my happiness, and I deemed all that had befallen me a dream.

Marya looked sometimes thoughtfully upon me and sometimes upon the road, and did not seem either to have recovered her senses. We kept silence — our hearts were too weary with emotion.

At the end of two hours we had already reached the neighbouring fort, which also belonged to Pugatchéf. We changed horses there.

By the alertness with which we were served and the eager zeal of the bearded Cossack whom Pugatchéf had appointed Commandant, I saw that, thanks to the talk of the postillion who had driven us, I was taken for a favourite of the master.

When we again set forth it was getting dark. We were approaching a little town where, according to the bearded Commandant, there ought to be a strong detachment on the march to join the usurper.

The sentries stopped us, and to the shout, "Who goes there?" our postillion replied aloud —

"The Tzar's gossip, travelling with his good woman."

Immediately a party of Russian hussars surrounded us with awful oaths.

"Get out, devil's gossip!" a Quartermaster with thick moustachios said to me.

"We'll give you a bath, you and your good woman!"

I got out of the "*kibitka*," and asked to be taken before the authorities.

Seeing I was an officer, the men ceased swearing, and the Quartermaster took me to the Major's.

Savéliitch followed me, grumbling —

"That's fun — gossip of the Tzar! — out of the frying-pan into the fire! Oh, Lord! how will it all end?"

The "*kibitka*" followed at a walk. In five minutes we reached a little house, brilliantly lit up. The Quartermaster left me under the guard, and went in to announce his capture.

He returned almost directly, and told me "his high mightiness," had not time to see me, and that he had bid me be taken to prison, and that my good woman be brought before him.

"What does it all mean?" I cried, furiously; "is he gone mad?"

"I cannot say, your lordship," replied the Quartermaster, "only his high mightiness has given orders that your lordship be taken to prison, and that her ladyship be taken before his high mightiness, your lordship."

I ran up the steps. The sentries had not time to stop me, and I entered straightway the room, where six hussar officers were playing "*faro*."

The Major held the bank.

What was my surprise when, in a momentary glance at him, I recognized in him that very Iván Ivánovitch Zourine who had so well fleeced me in the Simbirsk inn!

"Is it possible?" cried I. "Iván Ivánovitch, is it you?"

"Ah, bah! Petr' Andréjitch! By what chance, and where do you drop from?"

Good day, brother, won't you punt a card?"

"Thanks — rather give me a lodging."

"What, lodging do you want? Stay with me."

"I cannot. I am not alone."

"Well, bring your comrade too."

"I am not with a comrade. I am — with a lady."

"With a lady — where did you pick her up, brother?"

After saying which words Zourine began to whistle so slyly that all the others began to laugh, and I remained confused.

"Well," continued Zourine, "then there is nothing to be done. I'll give you a lodging. But it is a pity; we would have had a spree like last time. Hullo! there, boy, why is not Pugatchéf's gossip brought up? Is she refractory? Tell her she has nothing to fear, that the gentleman who wants her is very good, that he will not offend her in any way, and at the same time shove her along by the shoulder."

"What are you talking about?" I said to Zourine; "of what gossip of Pugatchéf's are you speaking? It is the daughter of Captain Mironoff. I have delivered her from captivity, and I am taking her now to my father's house, where I shall leave her."

"What? So it's you whom they came to announce a while ago? In heaven's name, what does all this mean?"

"I'll tell you all about it presently. But now I beg of you, do reassure the poor girl, whom your hussars have frightened dreadfully."

Zourine directly settled matters. He went out himself into the street to make excuses to Marya for the involuntary misunderstanding, and ordered the Quartermaster to take her to the best lodging in the town. I stayed to sleep at Zourine's house. We supped together, and as soon as I found myself alone with Zourine, I told him all my adventures.

He heard me with great attention, and when I had done, shaking his head —

"All that's very well, brother," said he, "but one thing is not well. Why the devil do you want to marry? As an honest officer, as a good fellow, I would not deceive you. Believe me, I implore you, marriage is but a folly. Is it wise of you to bother yourself with a wife and rock babies? Give up the idea. Listen to me; part with the Commandant's daughter. I have cleared and made safe the road to Simbirsk; send her to-morrow to your parents alone, and you stay in my detachment. If you fall again into the hands of the rebels it will not be easy for you to get off another time. In this way, your love fit will cure itself, and all will be for the best."

Though I did not completely agree with him, I yet felt that duty and honour alike required my presence in the Tzarina's army; so I resolved to follow in part Zourine's advice, and send Marya to my parents, and stay in his troop.

Savéliitch came to help me to undress. I told him he would have to be ready to start on the morrow with Marya Ivánofna. He began by showing obstinacy.

"What are you saying, sir? How can you expect me to leave you? Who will serve you, and what will your parents say?"

Knowing the obstinacy of my retainer, I resolved to meet him with sincerity and coaxing.

"My friend, Arkhip Savéliitch," I said to him, "do not refuse me. Be my benefactor. Here I have no need of a servant, and I should not be easy if Marya Ivánofna were to go without you. In serving her you serve me, for I have made up my mind to marry her without fail directly circumstances will permit."

Savéliitch clasped his hands with a look of surprise and stupefaction impossible to describe.

"Marry!" repeated he, "the child wants to marry. But what will your father say? And your mother, what will she think?"

"They will doubtless consent," replied I, "when they know Marya Ivánofna. I count on you. My father and mother have full confidence in you. You will intercede for us, won't you?"

The old fellow was touched.

"Oh! my father, Petr' Andréjitch," said he, "although you do want to marry too early, still Marya Ivánofna is such a good young lady it would be a sin to let slip so good a chance. I will do as you wish. I will take her, this angel of God, and I will tell your parents, with all due deference, that such a betrothal needs no dowry."

I thanked Savéliitch, and went away to share Zourine's room.

In my emotion I again began to talk. At first Zourine willingly listened, then his words became fewer and more vague, and at last he replied to one of my questions by a vigorous snore, and I then followed his example.

On the morrow, when I told Marya my plans, she saw how reasonable they were, and agreed to them.

As Zourine's detachment was to leave the town that same day, and it was no longer possible to hesitate, I parted with Marya after entrusting her to Savéliitch, and giving him a letter for my parents. Marya bid me good-bye all forlorn; I could answer her nothing, not wishing to give way to the feelings of my heart before the bystanders.

I returned to Zourine's silent and thoughtful; he wished to cheer me. I hoped to raise my spirits; we passed the day noisily, and on the morrow we marched.

It was near the end of the month of February. The winter, which had rendered manoeuvres difficult, was drawing to a close, and our Generals were making ready for a combined campaign.

Pugatchéf had reassembled his troops, and was still to be found before Orenburg. At the approach of our forces the disaffected villages returned to their allegiance.

Soon Prince Galítsyn won a complete victory over Pugatchéf, who had ventured near Fort Talitcheff; the victor relieved Orenburg, and appeared to have given the finishing stroke to the rebellion.

In the midst of all this Zourine had been detached against some mounted Bashkirs, who dispersed before we even set eyes on them.

Spring, which caused the rivers to overflow, and thus block the roads, surprised us in a little Tartar village, when we consoled ourselves for our forced inaction by the thought that this insignificant war of skirmishers with robbers would soon come to an end.

But Pugatchéf had not been taken; he reappeared very soon in the mining country of the Ural, on the Siberian frontier. He reassembled new bands, and again began his robberies. We soon learnt the destruction of Siberian forts, then the fall of Khasan, and the audacious march of the usurper on Moscow.

Zourine received orders to cross the River Volga. I shall not stay to relate the events of the war.

I shall only say that misery reached its height. The gentry hid in the woods; the authorities had no longer any power anywhere; the leaders of solitary detachments punished or pardoned without giving account of their conduct. All this extensive and beautiful country-side was laid waste with fire and sword.

May God grant we never see again so senseless and pitiless a revolt. At last Pugatchéf was beaten by Michelson, and was obliged to fly again.

Zourine received soon afterwards the news that the robber had been taken and the order to halt.

The war was at an end.

It was at last possible for me to go home. The thought of embracing my parents and seeing Marya again, of whom I had no news, filled me with joy. I jumped like a child.

Zourine laughed, and said, shrugging his shoulders —

“Wait a bit, wait till you be married; you’ll see all go to the devil then.”

And I must confess a strange feeling embittered my joy.

The recollection of the man covered with the blood of so many innocent victims, and the thought of the punishment awaiting him, never left me any peace.

“Eméla,” I said to myself, in vexation, “why did you not cast yourself on the bayonets, or present your heart to the grapeshot. That had been best for you.”

(After advancing as far as the gates of Moscow, which he might perhaps have taken had not his bold heart failed him at the last moment, Pugatchéf, beaten, had been delivered up by his comrades for the sum of a hundred thousand roubles, shut up in an iron cage, and conveyed to Moscow. He was executed by order of Catherine II., in 1775.)

Zourine gave me leave.

A few days later I should have been in the bosom of my family, when an unforeseen thunderbolt struck me. The day of my departure, just as I was about to start, Zourine entered my room with a paper in his hand, looking anxious. I felt a pang at my heart; I was afraid, without knowing wherefore. The Major bade my servant leave us, and told me he wished to speak to me.

“What’s the matter?” I asked, with disquietude.

“A little unpleasantness,” replied he, offering me the paper. “Read what I have just received.”

It was a secret dispatch, addressed to all Commanders of detachments, ordering them to arrest me wherever I should be found, and to send me under a strong escort to Khasan, to the Commission of Inquiry appointed to try Pugatchéf and his accomplices.

The paper dropped from my hands.

“Come,” said Zourine, “it is my duty to execute the order. Probably the report of your journeys in Pugatchéf’s intimate company has reached headquarters. I hope sincerely the affair will not end badly, and that you will be able to justify yourself to the Commission. Don’t be cast down, and start at once.”

I had a clear conscience, but the thought that our reunion was delayed for some months yet made my heart fail me.

After receiving Zourine’s affectionate farewell I got into my “*telega*,” two hussars, with drawn swords, seated themselves, one on each side of me, and we took the road to Khasan.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TRIAL.

I did not doubt that the cause of my arrest was my departure from Orenburg without leave. Thus I could easily exculpate myself, for not only had we not been forbidden to make sorties against the enemy, but were encouraged in so doing.

Still my friendly understanding with Pugatchéf seemed to be proved by a crowd of witnesses, and must appear at least suspicious. All the way I pondered the questions I should be asked, and mentally resolved upon my answers. I determined to tell the judges the whole truth, convinced that it was at once the simplest and surest way of justifying myself.

I reached Khasan, a miserable town, which I found laid waste, and well-nigh reduced to ashes. All along the street, instead of houses, were to be seen heaps of charred plaster and rubbish, and walls without windows or roofs. These were the marks Pugatchéf had left. I was taken to the fort, which had remained whole, and the hussars, my escort, handed me over to the officer of the guard.

He called a farrier, who coolly rivetted irons on my ankles.

Then I was led to the prison building, where I was left alone in a narrow, dark cell, which had but its four walls and a little skylight, with iron bars.

Such a beginning augured nothing good. Still I did not lose either hope or courage. I had recourse to the consolation of all who suffer, and, after tasting for the first time the sweetness of a prayer from an innocent heart full of anguish, I peacefully fell asleep without giving a thought to what might befall me.

On the morrow the gaoler came to wake me, telling me that I was summoned before the Commission.

Two soldiers conducted me across a court to the Commandant's house, then, remaining in the ante-room, left me to enter alone the inner chamber. I entered a rather large reception room. Behind the table, covered with papers, were seated two persons, an elderly General, looking severe and cold, and a young officer of the Guard, looking, at most, about thirty, of easy and attractive demeanour; near the window at another table sat a secretary with a pen behind his ear, bending over his paper ready to take down my evidence.

The cross-examination began. They asked me my name and rank. The General inquired if I were not the son of Andréj Petróvitch Grineff, and on my affirmative answer, he exclaimed, severely —

“It is a great pity such an honourable man should have a son so very unworthy of him!”

I quietly made answer that, whatever might be the accusations lying heavily against me, I hoped to be able to explain them away by a candid avowal of the truth.

My coolness displeased him.

"You are a bold, barefaced rascal," he said to me, frowning. "However, we have seen many of them."

Then the young officer asked me by what chance and at what time I had entered Pugatchéf's service, and on what affairs he had employed me.

I indignantly rejoined that, being an officer and a gentleman, I had not been able to enter Pugatchéf's service, and that he had not employed me on any business whatsoever.

"How, then, does it happen," resumed my judge, "that the officer and gentleman be the only one pardoned by the usurper, while all his comrades are massacred in cold blood? How does it happen, also, that the same officer and gentleman could live snugly and pleasantly with the rebels, and receive from the ringleader presents of a '*pelisse*,' a horse, and a half rouble? What is the occasion of so strange a friendship? And upon what can it be founded if not on treason, or at the least be occasioned by criminal and unpardonable baseness?"

The words of the officer wounded me deeply, and I entered hotly on my vindication.

I related how my acquaintance with Pugatchéf had begun, on the steppe, in the midst of a snowstorm; how he had recognized me and granted me my life at the taking of Fort Bélogorsk. I admitted that, indeed, I had accepted from the usurper a "*touloup*" and a horse; but I had defended Fort Bélogorsk against the rascal to the last gasp. Finally I appealed to the name of my General, who could testify to my zeal during the disastrous siege of Orenburg.

The severe old man took from the table an open letter, which he began to read aloud.

"In answer to your excellency on the score of Ensign Grineff, who is said to have been mixed up in the troubles, and to have entered into communication with the robber, communication contrary to the rules and regulations of the service, and opposed to all the duties imposed by his oath, I have the honour to inform you that the aforesaid Ensign Grineff served at Orenburg from the month of Oct., 1773, until Feb. 24th of the present year, upon which day he left the town, and has not been seen since. Still the enemy's deserters have been heard to declare that he went to Pugatchéf's camp, and that he accompanied him to Fort Bélogorsk, where he was formerly in garrison. On the other hand, in respect to his conduct I can —"

Here the General broke off, and said to me with harshness —

"Well, what have you to say now for yourself?"

I was about to continue as I had begun, and relate my connection with Marya as openly as the rest. But suddenly I felt an unconquerable disgust to tell such a story. It occurred to me that if I mentioned her, the Commission would oblige her to appear; and the idea of exposing her name to all the scandalous things said by the rascals under cross-examination, and the thought of even seeing her in their presence, was so repugnant to me that I

became confused, stammered, and took refuge in silence.

My judges, who appeared to be listening to my answers with a certain good will, were again prejudiced against me by the sight of my confusion. The officer of the Guard requested that I should be confronted with the principal accuser. The General bade them bring in *yesterday's rascal*. I turned eagerly towards the door to look out for my accuser.

A few moments afterwards the clank of chains was heard, and there entered — Chvabrine. I was struck by the change that had come over him. He was pale and thin. His hair, formerly black as jet, had begun to turn grey. His long beard was unkempt. He repeated all his accusations in a feeble, but resolute tone. According to him, I had been sent by Pugatchéf as a spy to Orenburg; I went out each day as far as the line of sharpshooters to transmit written news of all that was passing within the town; finally, I had definitely come over to the usurper's side, going with him from fort to fort, and trying, by all the means in my power, to do evil to my companions in treason, to supplant them in their posts, and profit more by the favours of the arch-rebel. I heard him to the end in silence, and felt glad of one thing; he had never pronounced Marya's name. Was it because his self-love was wounded by the thought of her who had disdainfully rejected him, or was it that still within his heart yet lingered a spark of the same feeling which kept me silent? Whatever it was, the Commission did not hear spoken the name of the daughter of the Commandant of Fort Bélogorsk. I was still further confirmed in the resolution I had taken, and when the judges asked me if I had aught to answer to Chvabrine's allegations, I contented myself with saying that I did abide by my first declaration, and that I had nothing more to show for my vindication.

The General bid them take us away. We went out together. I looked calmly at Chvabrine, and did not say one word to him. He smiled a smile of satisfied hatred, gathered up his fetters, and quickened his pace to pass before me. I was taken back to prison, and after that I underwent no further examination.

I was not witness to all that I have still to tell my readers, but I have heard the whole thing related so often that the least little details have remained graven in my memory, and it seems to me I was present myself.

Marya was received by my parents with the cordial kindness characteristic of people in old days. In the opportunity presented to them of giving a home to a poor orphan they saw a favour of God. Very soon they became truly attached to her, for one could not know her without loving her. My love no longer appeared a folly even to my father, and my mother thought only of the union of her Petrúsha with the Commandant's daughter.

The news of my arrest electrified with horror my whole family. Still, Marya had so simply told my parents the origin of my strange friendship with Pugatchéf that, not only were they not uneasy, but it even made them laugh heartily. My father could not believe it possible that I should be mixed up in a disgraceful revolt, of which the object was the downfall of the throne and the extermination of the race of "*boyárs*." He cross-

examined Savéliitch sharply, and my retainer confessed that I had been the guest of Pugatchéf, and that the robber had certainly behaved generously towards me. But at the same time he solemnly averred upon oath that he had never heard me speak of any treason. My old parents' minds were relieved, and they impatiently awaited better news. But as to Marya, she was very uneasy, and only caution and modesty kept her silent.

Several weeks passed thus. All at once my father received from Petersburg a letter from our kinsman, Prince Banojik. After the usual compliments he announced to him that the suspicions which had arisen of my participation in the plots of the rebels had been proved to be but too well founded, adding that condign punishment as a deterrent should have overtaken me, but that the Tzarina, through consideration for the loyal service and white hairs of my father, had condescended to pardon the criminal son, and, remitting the disgrace-fraught execution, had condemned him to exile for life in the heart of Siberia.

This unexpected blow nearly killed my father. He lost his habitual firmness, and his sorrow, usually dumb, found vent in bitter lament.

"What!" he never ceased repeating, well-nigh beside himself, "What! my son mixed up in the plots of Pugatchéf! Just God! what have I lived to see! The Tzarina grants him life, but does that make it easier for me to bear? It is not the execution which is horrible. My ancestor perished on the scaffold for conscience sake, my father fell with the martyrs Volynski and Khuchtchoff, but that a '*boyár*' should forswear his oath — that he should join with robbers, rascals, convicted felons, revolted slaves! Shame for ever — shame on our race!"

Frightened by his despair, my mother dared not weep before him, and endeavoured to give him courage by talking of the uncertainty and injustice of the verdict. But my father was inconsolable.

Marya was more miserable than anyone. Fully persuaded that I could have justified myself had I chosen, she suspected the motive which had kept me silent, and deemed herself the sole cause of my misfortune. She hid from all eyes her tears and her suffering, but never ceased thinking how she could save me.

One evening, seated on the sofa, my father was turning over the Court Calendar; but his thoughts were far away, and the book did not produce its usual effect on him. He was whistling an old march. My mother was silently knitting, and her tears were dropping from time to time on her work. Marya, who was working in the same room, all at once informed my parents that she was obliged to start for Petersburg, and begged them to give her the means to do so.

My mother was much affected by this declaration.

"Why," said she, "do you want to go to Petersburg? You, too — do you also wish to forsake us?"

Marya made answer that her fate depended on the journey, and that she was going to seek help and countenance from people high in favour, as the daughter of a man who had fallen victim to his fidelity.

My father bowed his head. Each word which reminded him of the alleged crime of his son was to him a keen reproach.

"Go," he said at last, with a sigh; "we do not wish to cast any obstacles between you and happiness. May God grant you an honest man as a husband, and not a disgraced and convicted traitor."

He rose and left the room.

Left alone with my mother, Marya confided to her part of her plans. My mother kissed her with tears, and prayed God would grant her success.

A few days afterwards Marya set forth with Palashka and her faithful Savéliitch, who, necessarily, parted from me, consoled himself by remembering he was serving my betrothed.

Marya arrived safely at Sofia, and, learning that the court at this time was at the summer palace of Tzarskoe-Selo, she resolved to stop there. In the post-house she obtained a little dressing-room behind a partition.

The wife of the postmaster came at once to gossip with her, and announced to her pompously that she was the niece of a stove-warmer attached to the Palace, and, in a word, put her up to all the mysteries of the Palace. She told her at what hour the Tzarina rose, had her coffee, went to walk; what high lords there were about her, what she had deigned to say the evening before at table, who she received in the evening, and, in a word, the conversation of Anna Vlassiéfna might have been a leaf from any memoir of the day, and would be invaluable now. Marya Ivanofna heard her with great attention.

They went together to the Imperial Gardens, where Anna Vlassiéfna told Marya the history of every walk and each little bridge. Both then returned home, charmed with one another.

On the morrow, very early, Marya dressed herself and went to the Imperial Gardens. The morning was lovely. The sun gilded with its beams the tops of the lindens, already yellowed by the keen breath of autumn. The large lake sparkled unruffled; the swans, just awake, were gravely quitting the bushes on the bank. Marya went to the edge of a beautiful lawn, where had lately been erected a monument in honour of the recent victories of Count Roumianzeff.

All at once a little dog of English breed ran towards her, barking. Marya stopped short, alarmed. At this moment a pleasant woman's voice said —

"Do not be afraid; he will not hurt you."

Marya saw a lady seated on a little rustic bench opposite the monument, and she went and seated herself at the other end of the bench. The lady looked attentively at her, and Marya, who had stolen one glance at her, could now see her well. She wore a cap and a white morning gown and a little light cloak. She appeared about 50 years old; her face, full and high-coloured, expressed repose and gravity, softened by the sweetness of her blue eyes and charming smile. She was the first to break the silence.

"Doubtless you are not of this place?" she asked.

"You are right, lady; I only arrived yesterday from the country."

"You came with your parents?"

"No, lady, alone."

"Alone! but you are very young to travel by yourself."

"I have neither father nor mother."

"You are here on business?"

"Yes, lady, I came to present a petition to the Tzarina."

"You are an orphan; doubtless you have to complain of injustice or wrong."

"No, lady, I came to ask grace, and not justice."

"Allow me to ask a question: Who are you?"

"I am the daughter of Captain Mironoff."

"Of Captain Mironoff? He who commanded one of the forts in the Orenburg district?"

"Yes, lady."

The lady appeared moved.

"Forgive me," she resumed, in a yet softer voice, "if I meddle in your affairs; but I am going to Court. Explain to me the object of your request; perhaps I may be able to help you."

Marya rose, and respectfully saluted her. Everything in the unknown lady involuntarily attracted her, and inspired trust. Marya took from her pocket a folded paper; she offered it to her protectress, who ran over it in a low voice.

When she began she looked kind and interested, but all at once her face changed, and Marya, who followed with her eyes her every movement, was alarmed by the hard expression of the face lately so calm and gracious.

"You plead for Grineff," said the lady, in an icy tone. "The Tzarina cannot grant him grace. He passed over to the usurper, not as an ignorant and credulous man, but as a depraved and dangerous good-for-nothing."

"It's not true!" cried Marya.

"What! it's not true?" retorted the lady, flushing up to her eyes.

"It is not true, before God it is not true," exclaimed Marya. "I know all; I will tell you all. It is for me only that he exposed himself to all the misfortunes which have overtaken him. And if he did not vindicate himself before the judges, it is because he did not wish me to be mixed up in the affair."

And Marya eagerly related all the reader already knows.

The lady listened with deep attention.

"Where do you lodge?" she asked, when the young girl concluded her story. And when she heard that it was with Anna Vlassiéfna, she added, with a smile: "Ah! I know! Good-bye! Do not tell anyone of our meeting. I hope you will not have to wait long for an answer to your letter."

Having said these words, she rose and went away by a covered walk.

Marya returned home full of joyful hope.

Her hostess scolded her for her early morning walk — bad, she said, in the autumn for the health of a young girl. She brought the "*samovar*," and over a cup of tea she was about to resume her endless discussion of the Court, when a carriage with a coat-of-arms stopped before the door.

A lackey in the Imperial livery entered the room, announcing that the Tzarina deigned to call to her presence the daughter of Captain Mironoff.

Anna Vlassiéfna was quite upset by this news.

“Oh, good heavens!” cried she; “the Tzarina summons you to Court! How did she know of your arrival? And how will you acquit yourself before the Tzarina, my little mother? I think you do not even know how to walk Court fashion. I ought to take you; or, stay, should I not send for the midwife, that she might lend you her yellow gown with flounces?”

But the lackey declared that the Tzarina wanted Marya Ivánofna to come alone, and in the dress she should happen to be wearing. There was nothing for it but to obey, and Marya Ivánofna started.

She foresaw that our fate was in the balance, and her heart beat violently. After a few moments the coach stopped before the Palace, and Marya, after crossing a long suite of empty and sumptuous rooms, was ushered at last into the boudoir of the Tzarina. Some lords, who stood around there, respectfully opened a way for the young girl.

The Tzarina, in whom Marya recognized the lady of the garden, said to her, graciously —

“I am delighted to be able to accord you your prayer. I have had it all looked into. I am convinced of the innocence of your betrothed. Here is a letter which you will give your future father-in-law.” Marya, all in tears, fell at the feet of the Tzarina, who raised her, and kissed her forehead. “I know,” said she, “you are not rich, but I owe a debt to the daughter of Captain Mironoff. Be easy about your future.”

After overwhelming the poor orphan with caresses, the Tzarina dismissed her, and Marya started the same day for my father’s country house, without having even had the curiosity to take a look at Petersburg.

Here end the memoirs of Petr’ Andréjitch Grineff; but family tradition asserts that he was released from captivity at the end of the year 1774, that he was present at the execution of Pugatchéf, and that the latter, recognizing him in the crowd, made him a farewell sign with the head which, a few moments later, was held up to the people, lifeless and bleeding.

Soon afterwards Petr’ Andréjitch became the husband of Marya Ivánofna.

Their descendants still live in the district of Simbirsk.

In the ancestral home in the village of —— is still shown the autograph letter of Catherine II., framed and glazed. It is addressed to the father of Petr’ Andréjitch, and contains, with the acquittal of his son, praises of the intellect and good heart of the Commandant’s daughter.

THE END.

THE CAPTAIN'S DAUGHTER — OMITTED CHAPTER

WE WERE approaching the banks of the Volga. Our regiment entered the village of N. and halted to spend the night there. The village headman told me that all the villages on the other side had rebelled, and that Pugachov's bands were prowling about everywhere. I was very much alarmed at this news. We were to cross the river the following morning.

Impatience possessed me and I could not rest. My father's estate was on the other side of the river, some twenty miles away. I asked if anyone would row me across. All the peasants were fishermen; there were plenty of boats. I came to Zurin and told him of my intention.

"Take care," he said, "it is dangerous for you to go alone. Wait for the morning. We will be the first to cross and will pay a visit to your parents with fifty Hussars in case of emergency."

I insisted on going. The boat was ready. I stepped into it with two boatmen. They pushed off and plied their oars.

The sky was clear. The moon was shining brightly. The air was still. The Volga flowed calmly and evenly. Swaying rhythmically, the boat glided over the dark waves. Half an hour passed. I sank into dreaming. I thought of the calm of nature and the horrors of civil war; of love, and so on. We reached the middle of the river.... Suddenly the boatmen began whispering together.

"What is it?" I asked, coming to myself.

"Heaven only knows; we can't tell," the boatmen answered, looking into the distance.

I looked in the same direction and saw in the dark something floating down the river. The mysterious object was approaching us. I told the oarsmen to stop and wait.

The moon hid behind a cloud. The floating phantom seemed darker still. It was quite close to me and yet I could not distinguish it.

"Whatever can it be?" the boatmen said. "It isn't a sail nor a mast."

Suddenly the moon came out from behind the cloud and lighted a terrible sight. A gallows fixed to a raft was floating toward us. Three corpses were swinging on the cross-bar. A morbid curiosity possessed me. I wanted to look into the hanged men's faces. I told the oarsmen to hold the raft with a boat-hook, and my boat knocked against the floating gallows. I jumped out and found myself between the terrible posts. The full moon lighted the disfigured faces of the unfortunate creatures.... One of them was an old Chuvash, another a Russian peasant boy of about twenty, strong and healthy. I was shocked when I looked at the third and could not refrain from crying out: it was our servant Vanka — poor Vanka, who, in his foolishness, went over to Pugachov. A black board was nailed over the gallows and had written on it in white letters: "Thieves and rebels." The oarsmen waited for me unconcerned, holding the raft with the hook. I stepped into the boat. The

raft floated down the river. The gallows showed black in the dim night long after we passed it. At last it disappeared and my boat landed at the high and steep bank.

I paid the oarsmen handsomely. One of them took me to the headman of the village by the landing-stage. We went into the hut together. When the headman heard that I was asking for horses he spoke to me rather rudely, but my guide whispered something to him and his sternness immediately gave way to hurried obsequiousness. The troika was ready in a minute. I stepped into the carriage and told the driver to take me to our estate.

We galloped along the high road past the sleeping villages. The only thing I feared was being stopped on the way. My night meeting on the Volga proved the presence of rebels in the district, but it also proved the strong counter-action on the part of the authorities. To meet all emergencies I had in my pocket the pass given me by Pugachov and Colonel Zurin's order. But I did not meet anyone, and, toward morning, I saw the river and the pine copse behind which lay our village. The driver whipped up the horses and in another quarter of an hour I drove into it. Our house stood at the other end. The horses were going at full speed. Suddenly in the middle of the village street the driver began pulling up.

"What is it?" I asked impatiently.

"A barrier, sir," the driver answered, with difficulty bringing the fuming horses to a standstill.

Indeed, I saw a barrier fixed across the road and a watchman with a club. The man came up to me and, taking off his hat, asked for my passport.

"What does this mean?" I asked him. "Why is this barrier here? Whom are you guarding?"

"Why, sir, we are in rebellion," he answered, scratching himself.

"And where are your masters?" I asked, with a sinking heart.

"Where are our masters?" the peasant repeated. "Master and mistress are in the granary."

"In the granary?"

"Why, Andryushka, the headman, put them in stocks, you see, and wants to take them to our Father Czar."

"Good Heaven! Lift the bar, you blockhead! What are you gaping at?"

The watchman did not move. I jumped out of the carriage, gave him a box on the ear, I am sorry to say, and lifted the bar myself.

The peasant looked at me in stupid perplexity. I took my seat in the carriage once more and told the driver to drive to the house as fast as he could. Two peasants, armed with clubs, were standing by the locked doors of the granary. The carriage drew up just in front of them. I jumped out and rushed at them.

"Open the doors!" I said to them.

I must have looked formidable, for they threw down their clubs and ran away. I tried to knock the lock off the door or to pick it, but the doors were of oak and the huge lock was unbreakable. At that moment a young peasant came out of the servants' quarters and haughtily asked me how I dared to

make a disturbance.

"Where is Andryushka, the headman?" I shouted to him. "Call him to me."

"I am Andrey Afanasyevich and not Andryushka," he answered proudly, with his arms akimbo. "What do you want?"

By way of an answer, I seized him by the collar, and dragging him to the granary doors told him to open them. He did not comply at once; but the "fatherly."

chastisement had due effect upon him. He pulled out the key and unlocked the granary. I rushed over the threshold and saw in a dark corner dimly lighted by a narrow skylight my father and mother. Their hands were tied and their feet were in stocks. I flew to embrace them and could not utter a word. They both looked at me with amazement: three years of military life had so altered me that they could not recognize me.

Suddenly I heard the sweet voice I knew: "Pyotr Andreyich! It's you?"

I turned round and saw Marya Ivanovna in another corner, also bound hand and foot. I was dumbfounded. My father looked at me in silence, not daring to believe his senses. His face lit up with joy.

"Welcome, Petrusha," he said, pressing me to his heart. "Thank God, we have lived to see you!"

My mother cried out and burst into tears.

"Petrusha, my darling!" she said. "How has the Lord brought you here? Are you well?"

I hastened to cut with my sword the ropes that bound them and to take them out of their prison; but when I came to the door I found that it had been locked again.

"Andryushka, open!" I shouted.

"No fear!" the man answered from behind the door. "You may as well sit here, too! We'll teach you how to be rowdy and drag the Czar's officials by the collar!" I began looking round the granary to see if there was some way of getting out.

"Don't trouble," my father said to me. "It's not my way to have granaries into which thieves could find a way."

My mother, who had rejoiced a moment before at my coming, was overcome with despair at the thought that I, too, would have to perish with the rest of the family. But I was calmer now that I was with them and Marya Ivanovna. I had a sword and two pistols; I could withstand a siege. Zurin was due to arrive in the evening and would set us free. I told all this to my parents and succeeded in calming my mother and Marya Ivanovna. They gave themselves up completely to the joy of our meeting, and several hours passed for us imperceptibly in expressions of affection and continual conversation.

"Well, Pyotr," my father said, "you have been foolish enough, and I was quite angry with you at the time. But it's no use remembering old scores. I hope that you have sown your wild oats and are reformed. I know that you have served as an honest officer should. I thank you; you have comforted

me in my old age. If I owe my deliverance to you, life will be doubly pleasant to me.”

I kissed his hand with tears and gazed at Marya Ivanovna, who was so overjoyed at my presence that she seemed quite calm and happy.

About midday we heard extraordinary uproar and shouting. “What does this mean?” my father said. “Can it already be your colonel?”

“Impossible,” I answered. “He won’t come before evening.”

The noise increased. The alarm bell was rung. We heard men on horseback galloping across the yard. At that moment Savelyich’s gray head was thrust through the narrow opening cut in the wall and the poor old man said in a pitiful voice:

“Andrey Petrovich! Pyotr Andreyich, my dear! Marya Ivanovna! We are lost! The villains have come into the village. And do you know who has brought them, Pyotr Andreyich? Shvabrin, Alexey Ivanych, damnation take him!”

When Marya Ivanovna heard the hated name she clasped her hands and remained motionless.

“Listen!” I said to Savelyich. “Send someone on horseback to the ferry to meet the hussar regiment and to tell the Colonel of our danger.”

“But whom can I send, sir? All the boys have joined the rebels, and the horses have all been seized. Oh, dear! There they are in the yard! They are coming to the granary.”

As he said this, we heard several voices behind the door. I made a sign to my mother and Marya Ivanovna to move away into a corner, bared my sword, and leaned against the wall just by the door. My father took the pistols, cocked them both, and stood beside me. The lock rattled, the door opened and Andryushka’s head showed. I hit it with my sword and he fell, blocking the doorway. At the same moment my father fired the pistol. The crowd that had besieged us ran away, cursing. I dragged the wounded man across the threshold and closed the door.

The courtyard was full of armed men. I recognized Shvabrin among them.

“Don’t be afraid,” I said to the women, “there is hope. And don’t you shoot any more, father. Let us save up the last shot.”

My mother was praying silently. Marya Ivanovna stood beside her, waiting with angelic calm for her fate to be decided. Threats, abuse, and curses were heard behind the door. I was standing in the same place ready to hit the first man who dared to show himself. Suddenly the villains subsided. I heard Shvabrin’s voice calling me by name.

“I am here. What do you want?”

“Surrender, Grinyov; resistance is impossible. Have pity on your old people. Obstinacy will not save you. I shall get at you!”

“Try, traitor!”

“I am not going to put myself forward for nothing or waste my men; I will set the granary on fire and then we’ll see what you will do, Belogorsky Don Quixote. Now it is time to have dinner. Meanwhile you can sit and

think it over at leisure. Good-bye! Marya Ivanovna, I do not apologize to you: you are probably not feeling bored with your knight beside you in the dark.”

Shvabrin went away, leaving sentries at the door. We were silent, each of us thinking his own thoughts, not daring to express them to the others. I was picturing to myself all that Shvabrin was capable of doing in his malice. I hardly cared about myself. Must I confess it? Even my parents’ fate terrified me less than Marya Ivanovna’s. I knew that my mother was adored by the peasants and the house serfs. My father, too, was loved in spite of his sternness, for he was just and knew the true needs of the men he owned. Their rebellion was a delusion, a passing intoxication, and not the expression of their resentment. It was possible that my parents would be spared. But Marya Ivanovna? What did the dissolute and unscrupulous man hold in store for her? I did not dare to dwell upon this awful thought and would have killed her (God forgive me!) sooner than see her fall once more into the hands of the cruel enemy.

Another hour passed. Drunken men could be heard singing in the village. Our sentries envied them, and in their annoyance abused us, threatening us with tortures and death. We were waiting for Shvabrin to carry out his threat. At last there was great commotion in the courtyard and we heard Shvabrin’s voice once more.

“Well, have you thought better of it? Do you surrender to me of your own will?”

No one answered.

After waiting a while, Shvabrin ordered his men to bring some straw. In a few minutes flames appeared, lighting the dim granary. Smoke began to rise from under the door.

Then Marya Ivanovna came up to me and, taking me by the hand, said in a low voice:

“Come, Pyotr Andreyich, don’t let both yourself and your parents perish because of me. Shvabrin will listen to me. Let me out!”

“Never!” I cried angrily. “Do you know what awaits you?”

“I will not survive dishonor,” she answered calmly, “but perhaps I shall save my deliverer and the family that has so generously sheltered a poor orphan. Goodbye, Andrey Petrovich! Good-bye, Avdotya Vassily- evna! You have been more than benefactors to me. Bless me! Farewell to you, too, Pyotr Andreyich, Believe me that... that...”

She burst into tears and buried her face in her hands.... I was beside myself. My mother was weeping.

“Stop this nonsense, Marya Ivanovna,” said my father. “Whoever would dream of letting you go alone to the brigands? Sit here and keep quiet. If we must die, we may as well die together. Listen! What is he saying now?”

“Do you surrender?” Shvabrin shouted. “You see you will be roasted in another five minutes.”

“We won’t surrender, you villain!” my father answered firmly.

His vigorous, deeply lined face was wonderfully animated. His eyes sparkled under the gray eyebrows. Turning to me, he said: "Now's the time!"

He opened the door. The flames rushed in and rose up to the beams whose chinks were stuffed with dry moss. My father fired the pistol, stepped over the burning threshold and shouted "Follow me!" I took my mother and Marya Ivanovna by the hands and quickly led them out. Shvabrin, shot through by my father's feeble hand, was lying by the threshold. The crowd of brigands who had rushed away at our sudden sally took courage and began closing in upon us. I succeeded in dealing a few more blows; but a well-aimed brick hit me right on the chest. I fell down and lost consciousness for a few moments; I was surrounded and disarmed. Coming to myself I saw Shvabrin sitting on the blood-stained grass, with all our family standing before him.

I was supported under the arms. A crowd of peasants, Cossacks, and Bashkirs hemmed us in. Shvabrin was terribly pale. He was pressing one hand to his wounded side. His face expressed malice and pain. He slowly raised his head, glanced at me and said, in a weak, hardly audible voice:

"Hang him... and all of them... except her." The crowd surrounded us at once and dragged us to the gates. But suddenly they left us and scampered away: Zurin and a whole squadron of Hussars, with bared swords, rode into the courtyard.

The rebels were flying as fast as they could. The Hussars pursued them, striking right and left with their swords and taking prisoners. Zurin jumped off his horse, bowed to my father and mother, and warmly clasped me by the hand.

"I have come just in time," he said to me. "Ah, and here is your betrothed!"

Marya Ivanovna flushed crimson. My father went up to him and thanked him calmly, though he was obviously touched. My mother embraced him, calling him an angel-deliverer.

"Welcome to our home!" my father said to him, and led him toward the house.

Zurin stopped as he passed Shvabrin.

"Who is this?" he asked, looking at the wounded man.

"It is the leader of the gang," my father answered, with a certain pride that betokened an old soldier. "God has helped my feeble hand to punish the young villain and to avenge the blood of my son."

"It is Shvabrin," I said to Zurin.

"Shvabrin! I am very glad. Hussars, take him! Tell the leech to dress his wound and to take the utmost care of him. Shvabrin must certainly be sent to the Kazan Secret Commission. He is one of the chief criminals and his evidence may be of great importance..."

Shvabrin wearily opened his eyes. His face expressed nothing but physical pain. The Hussars carried him away on an outspread cloak.

We went into the house. I looked about me with a tremor, remembering the years of my childhood. Nothing had changed in the house, everything was in its usual place: Shvabrin had not allowed it to be pillaged, preserving in his very degradation an unconscious aversion to base cupidity.

The servants came into the hall. They had taken no part in the rebellion and were genuinely glad of our deliverance. Savelyich was triumphant. It must be mentioned that during the alarm produced by the brigands' arrival he ran to the stables where Shvabrin's horse had been put, saddled it, led it out quietly and, unnoticed in the confusion, galloped toward the ferry. He met the regiment having a rest this side of the Volga. When Zurin heard from him of our danger, he ordered his men to mount, cried "Off! Off! Gallop!" and, thank God, arrived in time.

Zurin insisted that Andryushka's head should be exposed for a few hours at the top of a pole by the tavern.

The Hussars returned from their pursuit bringing several prisoners with them. They were locked in the same granary where we had endured our memorable siege. We all went to our rooms. The old people needed a rest. As I had not slept the whole night, I flung myself on the bed and dropped fast asleep. Zurin went to make his arrangements.

In the evening we all met round the samovar in the drawing-room, talking gaily of the past danger. Marya Ivanovna poured out the tea. I sat down beside her and devoted myself entirely to her. My parents seemed to look with favor upon the tenderness of our relations. That evening lives in my memory to this day. I was happy, completely happy — and are there many such moments in poor human life?

The following day my father was told that the peasants had come to ask his pardon. My father went out on to the steps to talk to them. When the peasants saw him they knelt down.

"Well, you silly fools," he said to them, "whatever did you rebel for?"

"We are sorry, master," they answered as one man. "Sorry, are you? They get into mischief and then they are sorry! I forgive you for the sake of our family joy — God has allowed me to see my son, Pyotr Andreyich, again. So be it, a sin confessed is a sin forgiven."

"We did wrong; of course we did."

"God has sent fine weather. It is time for haymaking; and what have you been doing for the last three days, you fools? Headman! send everyone to make hay; and mind that by St. John's Day all the hay is in stacks, you red-haired rascal! Begone!"

The peasants bowed and went to work as though nothing had happened. Shvabrin's wound proved not to be mortal. He was sent under escort to Kazan. I saw from the window how they laid him in a cart. Our eyes met. He bent his head and I made haste to move away from the window; I was afraid of looking as though I were triumphing over a humiliated and unhappy enemy.

Zurin had to go on farther. I decided to join him, in spite of my desire to spend a few more days with my family. On the eve of the march I came to

my parents and, in accordance with the custom of the time, bowed down to the ground before them, asking their blessing on my marriage with Marya Ivanovna. The old people lifted me up, and with joyous tears gave their consent. I brought Marya Ivanovna, pale and trembling, to them. They blessed us.... I will not attempt to describe what I was feeling. Those who have been in my position will understand; as to those who have not, I can only pity them and advise them, while there is still time, to fall in love and receive their parents' blessing.

The following day our regiment was ready. Zurin took leave of our family. We were all certain that the military operations would soon be over. I was hoping to be married in another month's time. Marya Ivanovna kissed me in front of all as she said good-bye. I mounted my horse; Savelyich followed me again and the regiment marched off. For a long time I kept looking back at the country house that I was leaving once more. A gloomy foreboding tormented me. Something seemed to whisper to me that my misfortunes were not yet over. My heart felt that another storm was ahead.

I — will not describe our campaign and the end of the Pugachov war. We passed through villages pillaged by Pugachov, and could not help taking from the poor inhabitants what the brigands had left them.

They did not know whom to obey. There was no lawful authority anywhere. The landowners were hiding in the forests. Bands of brigands were ransacking the country. The chiefs of separate detachments sent in pursuit of Pugachov, who was by then retreating toward Astrakhan, arbitrarily punished both the guilty and the innocent. The entire region where the conflagration had raged was in a terrible state. God save us from seeing a Russian revolt, senseless and merciless. Those who plot impossible upheavals among us, are either young and do not know our people or are hardhearted men who do not care a straw either about their own lives or those of other people.

EGYPTIAN NIGHTS



Translated by T. Keane

I

Quel est cet homme? — Ha, c'est un bien grand talent, il fait de sa voix tout ce qu'il veut. — Il devrait bien, madame, s'en faire une culotte.

CHARSKY was one of the native-born inhabitants of Saint Petersburg. He was not yet thirty years of age; he was not married; the service did not burden him. His late uncle, having been a vice-governor in the good old days, had left him a respectable estate. His life was a very agreeable one, but he had the misfortune to write and print verse. In the journals he was called "poet," and in the servants' quarters "scribbler."

In spite of the great privileges which versifiers enjoy (we must confess that, except the right of using the accusative instead of the genitive, and other so-called poetical licenses, we fail to see what are the particular privileges of Russian poets), in spite of their every possible privilege, these persons are compelled to suffer a great many disadvantages and much unpleasantness. The bitterest misfortune of all, the most intolerable for the poet, is the appellation with which he is branded, and which always clings to him. The public look upon him as their own property; in their opinion, he was created for their especial benefit and pleasure. Should he return from the country, the first person who meets him accosts him with:

"Haven't you brought anything new for us?"

Should the derangement of his affairs, or the illness of some being dear to him, cause him to become lost in reflection, immediately a trite smile accompanies the trite exclamation:

"No doubt you are composing something!"

Should he happen to fall in love, his fair one purchases an album at the English shop, and expects a poem.

Should he call upon a man whom he hardly knows, to talk about serious matters of business, the latter quickly calls his son and compels him to read some of the verses of so-and-so, and the lad regales the poet with some of his lame productions. And these are but the flowers of the calling; what then must be the thorns! Charsky acknowledged that the compliments, the questions, the albums, and the little boys bored him to such an extent, that he was constantly compelled to restrain himself from committing some act of rudeness.

Charsky endeavored in every possible way to rid himself of the intolerable appellation. He avoided the society of his literary brethren, and preferred to them men of the world, even the most shallow-minded. His

conversation was of the most commonplace character, and never turned upon literature. In his dress he always observed the very latest fashion, with the timidity and superstition of a young Moscovite arriving in Saint Petersburg for the first time in his life. In his study, furnished like a lady's bedroom, nothing recalled the writer; no books littered the tables; the divan was not stained with ink; there was none of that disorder which denotes the presence of the Muse and the absence of broom and brush. Charsky was in despair if any of his society friends found him with a pen in his hand. It is difficult to believe to what trifles a man, otherwise endowed with talent and soul, can descend. At one time he pretended to be a passionate lover of horses, at another a desperate gambler, and at another a refined gourmet, although he was never able to distinguish the mountain breed from the Arab, could never remember the trump cards, and in secret preferred a baked potato to all the inventions of the French cuisine. He led a life of dissipation, was seen at all the balls, over-ate at all the diplomatic dinners, and at all the soirees was as inevitable as the Rezanov ices. For all that, he was a poet, and his passion was invincible. When the "silly fit" (thus he called inspiration) came upon him, Charsky would lock himself up in his study, and write from morning till late into the night. He confessed to his genuine friends that only then did he know what real happiness was. The rest of his time he strolled about, dissembled, and was assailed at every step by the eternal question:

"Haven't you written anything new?"

One morning, Charsky felt that happy disposition of the spirit when the dreams shape themselves clearly before your eyes, and you find vivid, unexpected words to body forth your visions, when verses flow easily from the pen, and sonorous rhythms fly to meet harmonious thoughts. Charsky was mentally plunged into sweet oblivion... and the world, and the opinions of the world, and his own particular whims no longer existed for him. He was writing verse.

Suddenly the door of his study creaked, and a strange head appeared. Charsky started and frowned.

"Who is there?" he asked with vexation, inwardly cursing his servants, who were never in the ante-room when they were wanted.

The stranger entered. He was tall and spare, and appeared to be about thirty years of age. The features of his swarthy face were very expressive: his pale, lofty forehead, shaded by locks of black hair, his sparkling black eyes, aquiline nose, and thick beard surrounding his sunken, tawny cheeks, showed him to be a foreigner. He wore a black dress-coat, already whitened at the seams, and summer trousers (although the season was well into the autumn); under his threadbare black cravat, upon a yellowish shirt-front, glittered an imitation diamond; his shaggy hat seemed to have seen good and bad weather. Meeting such a man in a wood, you would have taken him for a robber; in society — for a political conspirator; in an ante-room — for a charlatan, a seller of elixirs and arsenic.

"What do you wish?" Charsky asked him in French.

“Signor,” replied the foreigner, with profound bows: “*Lei foglia perdonarmi se...*”

Charsky did not offer him a chair, and he rose himself: the conversation was continued in Italian.

“I am a Neapolitan artist,” said the stranger: “circumstances compelled me to leave my native land; I have come to Russia, trusting to my talent.”

Charsky thought that the Neapolitan was preparing to give some violoncello concerts and was disposing of his tickets from house to house. He was just about to give him twenty-five rubles in order to get rid of him as quickly as possible, when the stranger added:

“I hope, signor, that you will give friendly support to your confrere, and introduce me into the houses to which you have entree.”

It was impossible to offer a greater affront to Charsky’s vanity. He glanced haughtily at the individual who called himself his confrère.

“Allow me to ask, what are you, and for whom do you take me?” he said, with difficulty restraining his indignation.

The Neapolitan observed his vexation.

“Signor,” he replied, stammering: “*Ho creduto... ho sentito... la vostra Eccellenza... mi perdonera...*”

“What do you wish?” repeated Charsky drily.

“I have heard a great deal of your wonderful talent; I am sure that the gentlemen of this place esteem it an honor to extend every possible protection to such an excellent poet,” replied the Italian: “and that is why I have ventured to present myself to you....”

“You are mistaken, signor,” interrupted Charsky. “The calling of poet does not exist among us. Our poets do not solicit the protection of gentlemen; our poets are gentlemen themselves, and if our Maecenases (devil take them!) do not know that, so much the worse for them. Among us there are no ragged abbés, whom a musician would take off the streets to write him a libretto. Among us, poets do not go on foot from house to house, begging for help. Moreover, they must have been joking, when they told you that I was a great poet. It is true that I once wrote some wretched epigrams, but thank God, I haven’t anything in common with versifiers, and do not wish to have.”

The poor Italian became disconcerted. He looked around him. The pictures, marble statues, bronzes, and the costly baubles on Gothic what-nots, struck him. He understood that between the haughty dandy, standing before him in a tufted brocaded cap, gold-colored Chinese dressing-gown and Turkish sash — and himself, a poor wandering artist, in threadbare cravat and shabby dress-coat — there was nothing in common. He stammered out some unintelligible excuses, bowed, and wished to retire. His pitiable appearance touched Charsky, who, in spite of the pettiness of his character, had a good and noble heart. He felt ashamed of the irritability caused by the wound to his vanity.

“Where are you going?” he said to the Italian.

“Wait... I was compelled to decline an unmerited title and confess to you that I was not a poet. Now let us speak about your business. I am ready to serve you, if it be in my power to do so. Are you a musician?”

“No, Eccellenza,” replied the Italian; “I am a poor improviser.”

“An improviser!” cried Charsky, feeling all the cruelty of his reception. “Why didn’t you say sooner that you were an improviser?”

And Charsky pressed his hand with a feeling of sincere regret.

His friendly manner encouraged the Italian. He spoke naively of his plans. His exterior was not deceptive. He was in need of money, and he hoped somehow in Russia to improve his domestic circumstances. Charsky listened to him with attention.

“I hope,” said he to the poor artist, “that you will have success; society here has never heard an improviser. Curiosity will be aroused. It is true that the Italian language is not in use among us; you will not be understood, but that will be no great misfortune; the chief thing is that you should be in the fashion.”

“But if nobody among you understands Italian,” said the improviser, becoming thoughtful, “who will come to hear me?”

“Have no fear about that — they will come: some out of curiosity, others to pass away the evening somehow or other, others to show that they understand Italian. I repeat, it is only necessary that you should be in the fashion, and you will be in the fashion — here is my hand.”

Charsky dismissed the improviser very cordially, after having taken his address, and the same evening he set to work to do what he could for him.

II

I am both king and slave, both worm and god.
Derzhavin.

THE next day, in the dark and dirty corridor of a tavern, Charsky found number 35. He stopped at the door and knocked. It was opened by the Italian.

“Victory!” Charsky said to him: “your affairs are in a good way. The Princess N — offers you her salon; yesterday, at the rout, I succeeded in enlisting half of Saint Petersburg; get your tickets and announcements printed. If I cannot guarantee a triumph for you, I ‘ll answer for it that you will at least be a gainer in pocket...”

“And that is the chief thing,” cried the Italian showing his delight in lively gestures characteristic of his Southern origin. “I knew that you would help me. *Corpo di Bacco!* You are a poet like myself, and there is no denying that poets are excellent fellows! How can I show my gratitude to you? Wait.... Would you like to hear an improvisation?”

“An improvisation!... Can you then do without public, without music, and without sounds of applause?”

“Nonsense, nonsense! Where could I find a better public? You are a poet: you will understand me better than they, and your quiet approbation will be dearer to me than a whole storm of applause.... Sit down somewhere and give me a theme.”

Charsky sat down on a suitcase (of the two chairs in the narrow cubicle, one was broken and the other piled with papers and linen). The improviser took a guitar from a chair, and stood before Charsky touching the strings with bony fingers and awaiting his order.

“Here is your theme, then,” Charsky said to him: *“the poet himself chooses the subject of his songs; the crowd has not the right to command his inspiration.”*

The eyes of the Italian began to sparkle: he tried a few chords, raised his head proudly, and passionate strophes — the expression of instantaneous feeling — fell rhythmically from his lips....

*With open eyes the poet marches,
But seeing no one, seeming blind,
Now someone clutches at his garment,
And pulls him gently from behind!*

*“The fool! Where to? He must be dreaming.”
They cry: “This way — the road is clear.”
It is in vain they seek to guide him,
The heedless poet does not hear.*

*Such is the poet: like the wind
That man can neither call nor bind —
His flight is free as any eagle’s,
He asks no counsel in his art,
But like another Desdemona
Chooses the idol of his heart.*

The Italian ceased.... Charsky was silent, amazed and touched.

“Well?” asked the improviser.

Charsky seized his hand and pressed it firmly.

“Well, how was it?” asked the improviser.

“Wonderful!” replied the poet. “Another’s thought has scarcely reached your ears, and already it has become your own, as if you had nursed, fondled and developed it for a long time. And so for you there exists neither toil nor disenchantment, nor that uneasiness which precedes inspiration? Wonderful, wonderful!”

The improviser replied: “Every talent is inexplicable. How does the sculptor see, in a block of Carrara marble, the hidden Jupiter, and how does he bring it to light with hammer and chisel by chipping off its envelope? Why does the idea issue from the poet’s head already equipped with four rhymes, and measured off in ordered, regular feet? Thus, nobody,

except the improviser himself, can understand that rapidity of impression, that close connection between his own inspiration proper and the will of another; I myself would try in vain to explain it. But... I must think of my first evening. What is your opinion? What price could I charge for the tickets, so that it may not be too much for the public, and so that, at the same time, I may not be out of pocket? They say that La Signora Catalani charged twenty-five rubles. It's a good price...."

It was very disagreeable for Charsky to fall suddenly from the heights of poesy down to the bookkeeper's desk, but he understood worldly necessities very well, and he plunged into commercial calculations with the Italian. The latter, during this part of the business, exhibited such savage greed, such an artless love of gain, that he disgusted Charsky, who hastened to take leave of him, so that he might not lose altogether the feeling of ecstasy awakened within him by the brilliant improvisation. The preoccupied Italian did not observe this change, and he conducted Charsky into the corridor and out to the steps, with profound bows and assurances of eternal gratitude.

III

The price of a ticket is 10 rubles; the performance starts at seven o'clock.

Play-bill.

THE ballroom of Princess N — had been placed at the disposal of the improviser; a platform had been erected, and the chairs were arranged in twelve rows. On the appointed day, at seven o'clock in the evening, the room was illuminated; at the door, before a small table, to sell and receive tickets, sat a long-nosed old woman, in a gray hat with broken feathers, and with rings on all her fingers. Near the entrance to the house stood gendarmes.

The public began to assemble. Charsky was one of the first to arrive. He had played a large part in arranging for the performance, and wished to see the improviser, in order to learn if he was satisfied with everything. He found the Italian in a side room, looking at his watch with impatience. The improviser was attired in a theatrical costume. He was dressed in black from head to foot. The lace collar of his shirt was thrown open; his bare neck, by its strange whiteness, offered a striking contrast to his thick black beard; his hair was combed forward, and overshadowed his forehead and eyebrows.

All this was not very gratifying to Charsky, who did not care to see a poet in the dress of a wandering juggler. After a short conversation, he returned to the ballroom, which was now rapidly beginning to fill up. Soon all the rows of seats were occupied by brilliant ladies: the gentlemen crowded round the sides of the platform, along the walls, and behind the

chairs at the back; the musicians, with their stands, occupied two sides of the platform. In the middle, upon a table, stood a porcelain vase.

The audience was a large one. Everybody awaited the commencement with impatience. At last, at half- past seven, the musicians made a stir, prepared their bows, and played the overture from "Tancredi." All took their places and became silent. The last sounds of the overture ceased.... The improviser, welcomed by deafening applause which rose from all sides, advanced with profound bows to the very edge of the platform.

Charsky waited with uneasiness to see what would be the first impression created, but he perceived that the costume, which had seemed to him so unseemly, did not produce the same effect upon the audience; even Charsky himself found nothing ridiculous in the Italian, when he saw him upon the platform, with his pale face brightly illuminated by a multitude of lamps and candles. The applause subsided; the sound of voices ceased...

The Italian, expressing himself in bad French, requested the gentlemen present to indicate some themes, by writing them upon separate pieces of paper. At this unexpected invitation, all looked at one another in silence and nobody responded. The Italian, after waiting a little while, repeated his request in a timid and humble voice. Charsky was standing right under the platform; a feeling of uneasiness took possession of him; he had a presentiment that the business would not be able to go on without him, and that he would be compelled to write his theme. Indeed, several ladies turned their faces toward him and began to pronounce his name, at first in a low tone, then louder and louder. Hearing his name, the improviser sought him out with his eyes, and perceiving him at his feet, he handed him a pencil and a piece of paper with a friendly smile. To play a rôle in this comedy seemed very disagreeable to Charsky, but there was no help for it: he took the pencil and paper from the hands of the Italian and wrote some words. The Italian, taking the vase from the table, descended from the platform and presented the urn to Charsky, who dropped his theme into it. His example produced an effect: two journalists, in their capacity as literary men, considered it incumbent upon them to write each his theme; the secretary of the Neapolitan embassy, and a young diplomat recently returned from a journey and in ecstasies over Florence, placed in the vase their folded papers. At last, a very plain-looking girl, at the command of her mother, with tears in her eyes, wrote a few lines in Italian and, blushing to the ears, gave them to the improviser, the ladies in the meantime regarding her in silence, with a scarcely perceptible smile. Returning to the platform, the improviser placed the urn upon the table, and began to take out the papers one after the other, reading each aloud:

"La famiglia dei Cenci.... L'ultimo giorno di Pompeia.... Cleopatra e i suoi amanti.... La primavera veduta da una prigioniera.... Il trionfo di Tasso."

"What does the honorable company command?" asked the Italian humbly. "Will it indicate itself one of the subjects proposed, or let the matter be decided by lot?"

“By lot!” said a voice in the crowd.... “By lot, by lot!” repeated the audience.

The improviser again descended from the platform, holding the urn in his hands, and casting an imploring glance along the first row of chairs, asked:

“Who will be kind enough to draw out the theme?”

Not one of the brilliant ladies, who were sitting there, stirred. The improviser, not accustomed to Northern indifference, was obviously in distress.... Suddenly he perceived on one side of the room a small white-gloved hand held up: he turned quickly and advanced toward a majestic young beauty, seated at the end of the second row. She rose without the slightest embarrassment, and, with the greatest simplicity in the world, plunged her aristocratic hand into the urn and drew out a rolled slip of paper.

“Will you please unfold it and read,” said the improviser to her.

The young lady unrolled the paper and read aloud:

“Cleopatra e i suoi amanti.”

These words were uttered in a low voice, but such a complete silence reigned in the room, that everybody heard them. The improviser bowed profoundly to the young lady, with an air of the deepest gratitude, and returned to his platform.

“Gentlemen,” said he, turning to the audience: “the lot has indicated as the subject of improvisation: ‘Cleopatra and her lovers.’ I humbly request the person who has chosen this theme, to explain to me his idea: what lovers are in question, *perché la grande regina aveva molto?*”

At these words, several gentlemen burst out laughing. The improviser was somewhat embarrassed.

“I should like to know,” he continued, “to what historical topic does the person, who has chosen this theme, allude?... I should feel very grateful if this person would kindly explain.”

Nobody hastened to reply. Several ladies directed their glances toward the plain-looking girl who had written a theme at the command of her mother. The poor girl observed this hostile attention, and became so embarrassed, that the tears came into her eyes.... Charsky could not endure this, and turning to the improviser, he said to him in Italian:

“It was I who proposed the theme. I had in view a passage in Aurelius Victor, who alleges that Cleopatra named death as the price of her love, and that there were found adorers whom such a condition neither frightened nor repelled. It seems to me, however, that the subject is somewhat difficult.... Could you not choose another?”

But the improviser already felt the approach of the god.... He gave a sign to the musicians to play. His face became terribly pale; he trembled as if in a fever; his eyes sparkled with a strange fire; he pushed his dark hair off his forehead with his hand, wiped his lofty brow, covered with beads of perspiration, with his handkerchief... then suddenly stepped forward and folded his arms across his breast.... The music ceased.... The improvisation

began:

*The palace shone. Sweet songs resounded
To lyres and flutes. The dazzling queen
With voice and look inspired the feasters
And kindled the resplendent scene;
Her throne drew all men's hearts and glances,
But suddenly her fervor fled;
Pensive, she held the golden goblet,
And o'er it bent her wondrous head....*

*The regal feast seems hushed in slumber,
The guests, the choir, are still. But she
Now lifts her head up to address them
With an assured serenity:
"My love brings bliss, have you not sworn it?
That bliss the man who wills may buy;
Attend me: I shall make you equal,
Bid if you dare, the boon am I.
Who starts the auction-sale of passion?
I sell my love; but at a fee;
Who, at the cost of life, will purchase
The guerdon of a night with me?"
She spoke — and all are seized with horror,
Each heart with passion waxes bold;
Unmoved, she hears the troubled murmur,
Her face is insolent and cold,
Her gaze contemptuously circles
The thronged admirers gathered there...*

*Now one steps forth, two others follow,
Who greatly love and greatly dare.
As they approach her throne she rises —
Their eyes are clear, their step is free.
The bargain's sealed: three nights are purchased,
And death will take the lovers three.*

*The hall is frozen into silence,
Still as a statue sits each guest,
As lots are drawn in slow succession
From the dread urn the priests have blessed.
First Flavius, face sternly chiseled.
Who in the legions had grown grizzled —
Not readily the Roman bore
Affront: was life so dear a treasure?
The cost he did not stop to measure,*

*Accepting, as in time of war,
The challenge that was flung by pleasure.
Next Crito came, a sage though young,
Born in the groves of Epicurus;
The Graces he had loved and sung,
And Aphrodite too, and Eros...
The last, who charmed both heart and eye,
Was like a flower scarce unfolded;
It was his lot to love and die
Unknown, alas; his cheeks were shaded
With tender down, his eyes were bright,
With youthful ecstasy alight;
The violence of virgin passion
Was surging in his boyish breast...
On him the scornful queen permitted
Briefly a grieving look to rest.
“I vow... Mother of joy, to serve you,
And strangely, since for man and boy
I play the harlot, and surrender
Myself unto a purchased joy.
Then hear my vow, great Aphrodite,
Kings of the nether regions, hear,
You gods who govern dreadful Hades,
I vow — till dawn’s first rays appear
I shall delight my masters wholly
And show them every shape of bliss
That satisfies the lover’s ardor
With soft caress and curious kiss —*

*But when eternal Eos enters
In morning purple, then — I vow —*

*The lucky ones will greet the headsman,
And to his ax their necks will bow.”
And lo! the fevered day has passed,
The golden-horned moon is rising.
About the Alexandrian palace
The tender shade of night is cast.
Rare incense smokes, the lamps burn softly,
The fountains play with sounds of mirth,
The darkness brings voluptuous coolness
For those who shall be gods on earth.
‘Midst marvels of a queen’s designing,
In a luxurious dim room,
Behind the curtains’ purple gloom,
The aureate couch is softly shining....*

[Published posthumously, 1837]

DUBROVSKY



Translated by T. Keane

Written in 1832 and published after Pushkin's death in 1841, this unfinished novel concerns Vladimir Dubrovsky, a young nobleman whose land is confiscated by Kirila Petrovitch Troekurov, a greedy and powerful aristocrat. Determined to win justice, Dubrovsky gathers a band of serfs and steals from the rich to give to the poor.



Leonid Sobinov as Vladimir Dubrovsky in Eduard Nápravník's operatic adaptation of the unfinished novel, 1914

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I

SOME years ago, there lived on one of his estates a Russian gentleman of the old school named Kirila Petrovich Troyekurov. His wealth, distinguished birth, and connections gave him great weight in the provinces where his estates were situated. The neighbors were ready to gratify his slightest whim; the government officials trembled at his name. Kirila Petrovich accepted all these signs of obsequiousness as his rightful due. His house was always full of guests, ready to indulge his lordship in his hours of idleness and to share his noisy and sometimes boisterous mirth. Nobody dared to refuse his invitations or, on certain days, omit to put in an appearance at the village of Pokrovskoye. In his home circle, Kirila Petrovich exhibited all the vices of an uneducated man. Spoilt by all who surrounded him, he was in the habit of giving way to every impulse of his passionate nature, to every caprice of his somewhat narrow mind. In spite of the extraordinary vigor of his constitution, he suffered two or three times a week from surfeit, and became tipsy every evening.

Very few of the serf-girls in his household escaped the amorous attempts of this fifty-year-old satyr. Moreover, in one of the wings of his house lived sixteen girls engaged in needlework. The windows of this wing were protected by wooden bars, the doors were kept locked, and the keys retained by Kirila Petrovich. The young recluses at an appointed hour went into the garden for a walk under the surveillance of two old women. From time to time Kirila Petrovich married some of them off, and newcomers took their places. He treated his peasants and domestics in a severe and arbitrary fashion, in spite of which they were very devoted to him: they loved to boast of the wealth and influence of their master, and in their turn took many a liberty with their neighbors, trusting to his powerful protection.

Troyekurov's usual occupations were driving over his vast domains, feasting at length, and playing practical jokes, invented newly every day, the victims being generally new acquaintances, though his old friends did not always escape, one only — Andrey Gavrilovich Dubrovsky — excepted.

This Dubrovsky, a retired lieutenant of the Guards, was his nearest neighbor, and the owner of seventy serfs. Troyekurov, haughty in his dealings with people of the highest rank, respected Dubrovsky, in spite of his humble situation. They had been in the service together and Troyekurov knew from experience his impatient and resolute character. Circumstances separated them for a long time. Dubrovsky with his reduced fortune, was compelled to leave the service and settle down in the only village that remained to him. Kirila Petrovich, hearing of this, offered him his protection; but Dubrovsky thanked him and remained poor and independent. Some years later, Troyekurov, having retired with the rank of general, arrived at his estate. They met again and were delighted with each

other. After that they saw each other every day, and Kirila Petrovich, who had never deigned to visit anybody in his life, came quite without ceremony to the modest house of his old comrade. In some respects their fates had been similar: both had married for love, both had soon become widowers, and both had been left with an only child. The son of Dubrovsky was being brought up in Petersburg; the daughter of Kirila Petrovich was growing up under the eyes of her father, and Troyekurov often said to Dubrovsky:

“Listen, brother Andrey Gavrilovich; if your Volodka should turn out well, I will let him have Masha for his wife, in spite of his being as poor as a church mouse.”

Andrey Gavrilovich used to shake his head, and generally replied:

“No, Kirila Petrovich; my Volodka is no match for Marya Kirilovna. A penniless gentleman, such as he, would do better to marry a poor girl of the gentry, and be the head of his house, rather than become the bailiff of some spoilt baggage.”

Everybody envied the good understanding existing between the haughty Troyekurov and his poor neighbor, and wondered at the boldness of the latter when, at the table of Kirila Petrovich, he expressed his own opinion frankly, and did not hesitate to maintain an opinion contrary to that of his host. Some attempted to imitate him and ventured to overstep the limits of due respect; but Kirila Petrovich taught them such a lesson, that they never afterward felt any desire to repeat the experiment. Dubrovsky alone remained beyond the range of this general law. But an accidental occurrence upset and altered all this.

One day, in the beginning of autumn, Kirila Petrovich prepared to go out hunting. Orders had been given the evening before for the whips and huntsmen to be ready at five o'clock in the morning. The tent and kitchen had been sent on beforehand to the place where Kirila Petrovich was to dine. The host and his guests went to the kennels where more than five hundred harriers and greyhounds lived in luxury and warmth, praising the generosity of Kirila Petrovich in their canine language. There was also a hospital for the sick dogs, under the care of staff-surgeon Timoshka, and a separate place where the pedigreed bitches brought forth and suckled their pups. Kirila Petrovich was proud of this magnificent establishment, and never missed an opportunity of boasting about it before his guests, each of whom had inspected it at least twenty times. He walked through the kennels, surrounded by his guests and accompanied by Timoshka and the head whips, pausing before certain kennels, either to ask after the health of some sick dog, to make some observation more or less just and severe, or to call some dog to him by name and speak tenderly to it. The guests considered it their duty to go into raptures over Kirila Petrovich's kennels; Dubrovsky alone remained silent and frowned. He was an ardent sportsman; but his modest fortune only permitted him to keep two harriers and one pack of greyhounds, and he could not restrain a certain feeling of envy at the sight of this magnificent establishment.

“Why do you frown, brother?” Kirila Petrovich asked him. “Don’t you like my kennels?”

“No,” replied Dubrovsky abruptly: “the kennels are marvelous, indeed I doubt whether your men live as well as your dogs.”

One of the whips took offence.

“Thanks to God and our master, we don’t complain of the way we live,” said he; “but if the truth must be told, there is many a gentleman who would not do badly if he exchanged his manor-house for any one of these kennels: he would be better fed and warmer.”

Kirila Petrovich burst out laughing at his servant’s insolent remark, and the guests followed his example, although they felt that the whip’s joke might apply to them also. Dubrovsky turned pale and said not a word. At that moment a basket, containing some new-born puppies, was brought to Kirila Petrovich; he busied himself with them, choosing two for himself and ordering the rest to be drowned. In the meantime Andrey Gavrilovich had disappeared without anybody having observed it.

On returning with his guests from the kennels, Kirila Petrovich sat down to supper, and it was only then that he noticed the absence of Dubrovsky. His people informed him that Andrey Gavrilovich had gone home. Troyekurov immediately gave orders that he was to be overtaken and brought back without fail. He had never gone hunting without Dubrovsky, who was a great connoisseur in all matters relating to dogs, and an infallible umpire in all possible disputes connected with sport. The servant who had galloped after him, returned while they were still seated at table, and informed his master that Andrey Gavrilovich had refused to listen to him and would not return. Kirila Petrovich, as usual, was heated with liquor, and becoming very angry, he sent the same servant a second time to tell Andrey Gavrilovich that if he did not return at once to spend the night at Pokrovskoye, he, Troyekurov, would never have anything further to do with him. The servant galloped off again. Kirila Petrovich rose from the table, dismissed his guests and retired to bed.

The next day his first question was: “Is Andrey Gavrilovich here?” By way of answer, he was handed a letter folded in the shape of a triangle. Kirila Petrovich ordered his secretary to read it aloud and he heard the following:

“Gracious Sir!

“I do not intend to return to Pokrovskoye until you send the whip Paramoshka to me with an apology: and it shall be for me to decide whether to punish or forgive him. I do not intend to put up with jokes from your servants, or, for that matter, from you, as I am not a buffoon, but a gentleman of ancient lineage. I remain your obedient servant,” Audrey Dubrovsky.”

According to present ideas of etiquette, such a letter would be very unbecoming; yet it irritated Kirila Petrovich, not by its strange style and form, but by its substance.

“What!” thundered Troyekurov, jumping barefooted out of bed; “send my people to him with an apology! And he to decide whether to punish or pardon them! What can he be thinking of? He doesn’t know with whom he is dealing! I’ll show him what’s what! I’ll give him something to cry about! He shall know what it is to oppose Troyekurov!”

Kirila Petrovich dressed himself and set out for the hunt with his usual ostentation. But the chase was not successful; during the whole of the day one hare only was seen, and that escaped. The dinner in the field, under the tent, was also a failure, or at least it was not to the taste of Kirila Petrovich, who struck the cook, abused the guests, and on the return journey rode intentionally, with all his suite, through Dubrovsky’s fields.

II

SEVERAL days passed, and the animosity between the two neighbors did not subside. Andrey Gavrilovich returned no more to Pokrovskoye, and Kirila Petrovich, bored without him, vented his spleen in the most insulting expressions, which, thanks to the zeal of the neighboring gentry, reached Dubrovsky revised and augmented. A fresh incident destroyed the last hope of a reconciliation.

One day, Dubrovsky was driving around his little property, when, on approaching a grove of birch trees, he heard the blows of an axe, and a minute afterward the crash of a falling tree; he hastened to the spot and found some of the Pokrovskoye peasants calmly stealing his timber. Seeing him, they took to flight; but Dubrovsky, with the assistance of his coachman, caught two of them, whom he brought home bound. Moreover, two horses, belonging to the enemy, fell into the hands of the victor.

Dubrovsky was exceedingly angry. Before this, Troyekurov's people, who were well-known robbers, had never dared to do any mischief within the boundaries of his property, being aware of the friendship which existed between him and their master. Dubrovsky now perceived that they were taking advantage of the rupture which had occurred between him and his neighbor, and he resolved, contrary to all ideas of the rules of war, to teach his prisoners a lesson with the rods which they themselves had collected in his grove, and to send the horses to work, adding them to his own livestock.

The news of these proceedings reached the ears of Kirila Petrovich that very day. He was almost beside himself, and in the first moment of his rage, he wanted to take all of his domestics and make an attack upon Kistenyovka (for such was the name of his neighbor's village), raze it to the ground, and besiege the landholder in his own manor. Such exploits were not rare with him; but his thoughts soon took another direction. Pacing with heavy steps up and down the hall, he glanced casually out of the window, and saw a *troika* stopping at his gate. A little man in a leather traveling-cap and a frieze cloak stepped out of the carriage and proceeded toward the wing occupied by the bailiff. Troyekurov recognized the assessor Shabashkin, and gave orders for him to be sent in to him. A minute afterward Shabashkin stood before Kirila Petrovich, and bowing repeatedly, waited respectfully to hear his orders.

"Good day — what is your name anyway?" said Troyekurov. "What has brought you here?"

"I was going to town, Your Excellency," replied Shabashkin, "and I called on Ivan Demyanov to find out if there were any orders from Your Excellency."

"You have come just at the right time — whatever your name is. I have need of you. Have some vodka and listen to me."

Such a friendly welcome agreeably surprised the assessor: he declined the vodka, and listened to Kirila Petrovich with all possible attention.

"I have a neighbor," said Troyekurov, "a small proprietor, a rude fellow, and I want to take his property away from him.... What do you think of that?"

"Your Excellency, are there any documents, or...?"

"Don't talk nonsense, brother, what documents are you talking about? Ukases will take care of them. The point is to take his property away from him, in spite of the law. But stop! This estate belonged to us at one time. It was bought from a certain Spitzyn, and then sold to Dubrovsky's father. Can't you make a case out of that?"

"It would be difficult, Your Excellency: probably the sale was effected in strict accordance with the law."

"Think, brother; try your hardest."

"If, for example, Your Excellency could in some way obtain from your neighbor the deed, in virtue of which he holds possession of his estate, then, of course..."

"I understand, but that is the trouble: all his papers were burnt at the time of the fire."

"What! Your Excellency, his papers were burnt? What could be better? In that case, take proceedings according to law; without the slightest doubt you will receive complete satisfaction."

"You think so? Well, see to it; I rely upon your zeal, and you can rest assured of my gratitude." Shabashkin, bowing almost to the ground, took his departure; at once he began to occupy himself with the business intrusted to him and, thanks to his prompt action, exactly a fortnight afterward Dubrovsky received from town a summons to appear in court and to produce the documents, in virtue of which he held possession of the village of Kistenyovka.

Andrey Gavrilovich, greatly astonished by this unexpected request, wrote that very same day a somewhat rude reply, in which he explained that the village of Kistenyovka became his on the death of his father, that he held it by right of inheritance, that Troyekurov had nothing to do with the matter, and that anyone else's claim to this property of his was nothing but chicanery and fraud.

This letter produced a very agreeable impression on the mind of Shabashkin; he saw, in the first place, that Dubrovsky knew very little about legal matters; and, in the second, that it would not be difficult to place such a rash and hot-tempered man in a very disadvantageous position.

Andrey Gavrilovich, after a more careful consideration of the questions addressed to him, saw the necessity of replying more circumstantially. He wrote a sufficiently businesslike letter, but this ultimately proved insufficient also. Dubrovsky had no experience in litigation. He generally followed the dictates of common sense, a guide rarely safe, and nearly always insufficient.

The business dragged on. Confident of being in the right, Andrey Gavrilovich troubled himself very little about the matter; he had neither the inclination nor the means to scatter money about, and although he was always the first to poke fun at the venality of the scribbling fraternity, the idea of being made the victim of chicanery never entered his head. Troyekurov, on his side, thought as little of winning the case he had started. Shabashkin took the matter in hand for him, acting in his name, intimidating and bribing the judges and quoting and interpreting various ukases in the most distorted manner possible.

At last, on the 9th day of February, in the year 18 — , Dubrovsky received, through the town police, an invitation to appear at the district Court to hear the decision in the matter of the disputed property between himself — Lieutenant Dubrovsky — and General Troyekurov, and to signify his approval or disapproval of the verdict. That same day Dubrovsky set out for town. On the road he was overtaken by Troyekurov. They glared haughtily at each other, and Dubrovsky observed a malicious smile upon the face of his adversary.

Arriving in town, Andrey Gavrilovich stopped at the house of an acquaintance, a merchant, where he spent the night, and the next morning he appeared before the Court. Nobody paid any attention to him. After him arrived Kirila Petrovich. The clerks rose and stuck their pens behind their ears, while the members of the Court received him with every sign of abject obsequiousness, and an arm-chair was offered him out of consideration for his rank, years and corpulence. He sat down; Andrey Gavrilovich stood leaning against the wall. A deep silence ensued, and the secretary began in a sonorous voice to read the decree of the Court.

We cite it in full, believing that everyone will be pleased to see one of the ways in which we in Russia may lose an estate to which we have an indisputable right.

When the secretary had ceased reading, the assessor arose and, with a low bow, turned to Troyekurov, inviting him to sign the paper which he held out to him. Troyekurov, quite triumphant, took the pen and wrote beneath the decision of the Court a statement signifying his complete satisfaction with it.

It was now Dubrovsky's turn. The secretary handed the paper to him, but Dubrovsky stood immovable, with his head bowed. The secretary repeated his invitation: "To signify his full and complete satisfaction, or his manifest dissatisfaction, if he felt in his conscience that his case was just, and intended, at the time stipulated by law, to appeal against the decision of the Court."

Dubrovsky remained silent... Suddenly he raised his head, his eyes flashed, he stamped his foot, pushed back the secretary with such force that he fell, seized the inkstand, and hurled it at the assessor. Everyone was horrified.

"What!" Dubrovsky shouted, "Not to respect the Church of God! Out with you, you spawn of Ham!"

Then turning to Kirila Petrovich:

“Has such a thing ever been heard of, Your Excellency?” he continued. “The whips bring dogs into the Church of God! The dogs are running about the church! I will teach you a lesson!”

The guards rushed in on hearing the noise, and with difficulty overpowered him. They led him out and placed him in a sledge. Troyekurov went out after him, accompanied by the whole Court. Dubrovsky’s sudden madness had produced a deep impression upon his imagination and poisoned his triumph. The judges, who had counted upon his gratitude, did not receive a single affable word from him. He returned immediately to Pokrovskoye. Dubrovsky, in the meantime, lay in bed. The district doctor — not altogether a blockhead — bled him and applied leeches and fly-blisters to him. Toward evening he began to feel better, and the next day he was taken to Kistenyovka, which scarcely belonged to him any longer.

III

SOME time elapsed, but poor Dubrovsky's health showed no signs of improvement. It was true that the fits of madness did not recur, but his strength was visibly failing. He abandoned his former occupations, rarely left his room, and for days together remained absorbed in his own reflections. Yegorovna, a kind-hearted old woman who had once tended his son, now became his nurse. She waited upon him as though he were a child, reminded him when it was time to eat and sleep, fed him and put him to bed. Andrey Gavrilovich obeyed her, and had no dealings with anybody else. He was not in a condition to think about his affairs or to look after his property, and Yegorovna saw the necessity of informing young Dubrovsky, who was then serving in one of the regiments of Foot Guards stationed in Saint Petersburg, of everything that had happened. And so, tearing a leaf from the account-book, she dictated to Khariton the cook, the only literate person in Kistenyovka, a letter, which she sent off that same day to town to be posted.

But it is time to acquaint the reader with the real hero of our story.

Vladimir Dubrovsky had been educated at the cadet school and, on leaving it, had entered the Guards as sub-lieutenant. His father spared nothing that was necessary to enable him to live in a becoming manner, and the young man received from home a great deal more than he had any right to expect. Being imprudent and ambitious, he indulged in extravagant habits, played cards, ran into debt, and troubled himself very little about the future. Occasionally the thought crossed his mind that sooner or later he would be obliged to take to himself a rich bride, the dream of every poverty-stricken youth.

One evening, when several officers were visiting him, lolling on couches and smoking his amber pipes, Grisha, his valet, handed him a letter, the address and seal of which immediately struck the young man. He hastily opened it and read the following:

"Our Master Vladimir Andreyevich, I, your old nurse, have decided to report to you regarding your father's health. He is very poorly, sometimes he wanders in his talk,, and the whole day long he sits like a foolish child — but life and death are in the hands of God. Come to us, my bright little falcon, and we will send horses to meet you at Pesochnoye. We hear that the Court is going to hand us over to Kirila Petrovich Troyekurov, because it is said that we belong to him, although we have always belonged to you, and have always heard so ever since we can remember. You might, living in Saint Petersburg, inform our father the Czar of this, and he will not allow us to be wronged. I remain your faithful servant, nurse Arina Yegorovna Buzireva.

"I send my maternal blessing to Grisha, does he serve you well? It has been raining here for the last fortnight and Rodya the shepherd died about St. Nicholas' day!"

Vladimir Dubrovsky read these somewhat confused lines several times with great agitation. He had lost his mother during his childhood, and, hardly knowing his father, had been taken to Saint Petersburg when he was eight years of age. In spite of that, he was romantically attached to his father, and having had but little opportunity of enjoying the pleasures of family life, he loved it all the more in consequence.

The thought of losing his father pained him exceedingly, and the condition of the poor invalid, which he guessed from his nurse's letter, horrified him. He imagined his father, left in an out-of-the-way village in the hands of a stupid old woman and the domestics, threatened with some misfortune, and fading away helplessly in the midst of mental and physical tortures. Vladimir reproached himself with criminal neglect. Not having received any news of his father for a long time, he had not thought of making inquiries about him, supposing him to be traveling about or absorbed in the management of his estate. He decided to go to him and even to retire from the army, should his father's condition require his presence at his side. Seeing that he was upset, his friends left. Once alone, Vladimir wrote an application for leave of absence, lit his pipe, and sank into deep thought. That same evening he began to take further steps for obtaining leave of absence, and two days afterward he set out in a stage coach, accompanied by his faithful Grisha.

Vladimir Andreyevich neared the post station at which he was to take the turning for Kistenyovka. His heart was filled with sad forebodings; he feared that he would no longer find his father alive. He pictured to himself the dreary kind of life that awaited him in the village: the desolation, solitude, poverty and cares connected with business of which he did not understand a thing. Arriving at the station, he went to the postmaster and asked for horses. The postmaster, having inquired where he was going, informed him that horses sent from Kistenyovka had been waiting for him for the last four days. Before Vladimir Andreyevich there soon appeared the old coachman Anton, who used formerly to take him over the stables and look after his pony. Anton's eyes filled with tears on seeing his young master, and bowing to the ground, he told him that his old master was still alive, and then rushed off to harness the horses. Vladimir Andreyevich declined the proffered meal, and hastened to depart. Anton drove him along the cross-country roads, and conversation began between them.

"Tell me, if you please, Anton, what is this business between my father and Troyekurov?"

"God knows, little father Vladimir Andreyevich; the master, they say, fell out with Kirila Petrovich, and the latter went to law about it, though often he takes the law into his own hands. It is not the business of us servants to have a say about what our masters please to do, but God knows that your father had no business to go against the will of Kirila Petrovich: it's no use butting your head against a wall."

"It seems, then, that this Kirila Petrovich does just what he pleases with you?"

“He certainly does, master: he does not care a rap for the assessor, and the police officer is his errand boy. The gentry kowtow to him, for as the proverb says: ‘Where there is a trough, there will the pigs be also.’”

“Is it true that he is taking our estate from us?”

“Oh, master, that is what we have heard. The other day, the sexton from Pokrovskoye said at the christening held at the house of our overseer: ‘You’ve had it easy long enough; Kirila Petrovich will soon take you in hand;’ and Mikita the blacksmith said to him: ‘Sa- velich, don’t distress the godfather, don’t disturb the guests. Kirila Petrovich is for himself, and Andrey Gavrilovich is for himself — and we are all God’s and the Czar’s.’ But you cannot sew a button upon another person’s mouth.”

“Then you do not wish to pass into the possession of Troyekurov?”

“Into the possession of Kirila Petrovich! The Lord save and preserve us! His own people fare badly enough, and if he got possession of strangers, he would strip off, not only the skin, but the flesh also. No, may God grant long life to Andrey Gavrilovich; and if God should take him to Himself, we want nobody but you, our provider. Do not give us up, and we will stand by you.”

With these words, Anton flourished his whip, shook the reins, and the horses broke into a brisk trot.

Touched by the devotion of the old coachman, Dubrovsky became silent and gave himself up to his own reflections. More than an hour passed; suddenly Grisha roused him by exclaiming: “There is Pokrovskoye!” Dubrovsky raised his head. They were just then driving along the bank of a broad lake, out of which flowed a small stream which was lost to sight among the hills. On one of these, above a thick green wood, rose the green roof and belvedere of a huge stone house, and on another a church with five cupolas and an ancient belfry; round about were scattered the village huts with their kitchen gardens and wells. Dubrovsky recognized these places; he remembered that on that very hill he had played with little Masha Troyekurov, who was two years younger than he, and who even then gave promise of being a beauty. He wanted to make inquiries of Anton about her, but a certain bashfulness restrained him.

As they drove past the manor house, he noticed a white dress flitting among the trees in the garden. At that moment Anton whipped the horses, and impelled by that vanity, common to village coachmen as to drivers in general, he drove at full speed over the bridge and past the village. On emerging from the village, they ascended the hill, and Vladimir perceived the little birch grove, and to the left, in an open place, a small gray house with a red roof. His heart began to beat — before him was Kistenyovka, and the humble house of his father.

About ten minutes afterwards he drove into the courtyard. He looked around him with indescribable emotion: it was twelve years since he had last seen his birthplace. The little birches, which had just then been planted near the wooden fence, had now become tall, spreading trees. The courtyard, formerly ornamented with three regular flower-beds, between

which ran a broad path carefully swept, had been converted into a meadow, in which was grazing a tethered horse. The dogs began to bark, but recognizing Anton, they stopped and wagged their shaggy tails. The servants came rushing out of the house and surrounded the young master with loud manifestations of joy. It was with difficulty that he was able to make his way through the enthusiastic crowd. He ran up the rickety steps; in the vestibule he was met by Yegorovna, who tearfully embraced him.

"How do you do, how do you do, nurse?" he repeated, pressing the good old woman to his heart. "And father? Where is he? How is he?"

At that moment a tall old man, pale and thin, in a dressing-gown and cap, entered the room, dragging one foot after the other with difficulty.

"How are you Volodka?" said he in a weak voice, and Vladimir embraced his father warmly.

The joy proved too much for the sick man; he grew weak, his legs gave way beneath him, and he would have fallen, if his son had not held him up.

"Why did you get out of bed?" said Yegorovna to him. "He cannot keep on his feet, and yet he wants to behave just like anybody."

The old man was carried back to his bedroom. He tried to converse with his son, but he could not collect his thoughts, and his words were incoherent. He became silent and fell into a kind of doze. Vladimir was struck by his condition. He installed himself in the bedroom and requested to be left alone with his father. The household obeyed, and then all turned toward Grisha and led him away to the servants' hall, where they regaled him with a hearty meal according to the rustic custom, and entertained him hospitably, wearying him with questions and greetings.

IV

There is a coffin where the festive board was spread.

A FEW days after his arrival, young Dubrovsky wished to turn his attention to business, but his father was not in a condition to give him the necessary explanations, and there was no one in charge of Andrey Gavrilovich's affairs. Examining his papers, Vladimir only found the first letter of the assessor and a rough copy of his father's reply to it. From these he could not obtain any clear idea of the lawsuit, and he determined to await the result, trusting in the justice of their cause.

Meanwhile the health of Andrey Gavrilovich grew worse from hour to hour. Vladimir foresaw that his end was not far off, and he never left the old man, who was now in his second childhood.

In the meantime the term for appealing the case had elapsed and nothing had been done. Kistenyovka now belonged to Troyekurov. Shabashkin came to him, and with a profusion of salutations and congratulations, inquired when His Excellency intended to enter into possession of his newly acquired property — would he go and do so himself, or would he deign to commission somebody else to act as his representative?

Kirila Petrovich was troubled. By nature he was not avaricious; his desire for revenge had carried him too far, and now his conscience pricked him. He knew in what condition his adversary, the old comrade of his youth, was, and his victory brought no joy to his heart. He glared sternly at Shabashkin, seeking for some pretext to give him a dressing-down, but not finding a suitable one, he said to him in an angry tone:

“Get out! I'm in no mood to see you!”

Shabashkin, seeing that he was in a bad humor, bowed and hastened to withdraw, and Kirila Petrovich, left alone, began to pace up and down, whistling: “Thunder of victory resound!” which, with him, was always a sure sign of unusual agitation of mind.

At last he gave orders for the droshky to be got ready, wrapped himself up warmly (it was already the end of September), and, himself holding the reins, drove away.

He soon caught sight of Andrey Gavrilovich's little house. Contradictory feelings filled his soul. Satisfied vengeance and love of power had, to a certain extent, deadened his more noble sentiments, but at last these latter prevailed. He resolved to effect a reconciliation with his old neighbor, to efface the traces of the quarrel and restore to him his property. Having eased his soul with this good intention, Kirila Petrovich set off at a gallop toward the residence of his neighbor and drove straight into the courtyard.

At that moment the invalid was sitting at his bedroom window. He recognized Kirila Petrovich — and his face assumed a look of violent agitation: a livid flush replaced his usual pallor, his eyes gleamed and he uttered unintelligible sounds. His son, who was sitting there examining the account books, raised his head and was struck by the change in his father's

condition. The sick man pointed with his finger toward the courtyard with an expression of rage and horror. At that moment the voice and heavy tread of Yegorovna were heard: "Master, master! Kirila Petrovich has come! Kirila Petrovich is on the steps!" she cried.... "Good God! What is the matter? What has happened to him?" Andrey Gavrilovich had hastily gathered up the skirts of his dressing-gown and was preparing to rise from his arm-chair. He succeeded in getting upon his feet — and then suddenly collapsed. His son rushed toward him; the old man lay insensible and without breathing: he had had a stroke.

"Quick, quick! send to town for a doctor!" cried Vladimir.

"Kirila Petrovich is asking for you," said a servant, entering the room.

Vladimir gave him a terrible look.

"Tell Kirila Petrovich to take himself off as quickly as possible, before I have him turned out — go!"

The servant gladly left the room to execute his master's orders. Yegorovna struck her hands together. "Master," she exclaimed in a piping voice, "you will do for yourself! Kirila Petrovich will devour us all."

"Silence, nurse," said Vladimir angrily: "send Anton to town at once for a doctor."

Yegorovna left the room. There was nobody in the ante-chamber; all the domestics had run out into the courtyard to look at Kirila Petrovich. She went out on the steps and heard the servant deliver his young master's word. Kirila Petrovich heard it, seated in the droshky; his face became darker than night; he smiled contemptuously, looked threateningly at the assembled domestics, and then drove slowly out of the courtyard. He glanced up at the window where, a minute before, Andrey Gavrilovich had been sitting, but he was no longer there. The nurse remained standing on the steps, forgetful of her master's order. The domestics were noisily talking of what had just occurred. Suddenly Vladimir appeared in the midst of them, and said abruptly:

"There is no need for a doctor — father is dead!" General consternation followed. The domestics rushed to the room of their old master. He was lying in the arm-chair in which Vladimir had placed him; his right arm hung down to the floor, his head was sunk on his chest — there was not the least sign of life in his body, which, although not yet cold, was already disfigured by death. Yegorovna set up a wail. The domestics surrounded the corpse, which was left to their care, washed it, dressed it in a uniform made in the year 1797, and laid it out on the same table at which for so many years they had waited upon their master.

V

THE funeral took place on the third day. The body of the poor old man lay in the coffin, covered with a shroud and surrounded by candles. The dining-room was filled with domestics, ready to carry out the corpse. Vladimir and three servants raised the coffin. The priest went in front, followed by the deacon, chanting the prayers for the dead. The master of Kistenyovka crossed the threshold of his house for the last time. The coffin was carried through the wood — the church lay just behind it. The day was clear and cold; the autumn leaves were falling from the trees. On emerging from the wood, they saw before them the wooden church of Kistenyovka and the cemetery shaded by old lime trees. There reposed the body of Vladimir's mother; there, beside her tomb, a new grave had been dug the day before.

The church was full of the Kistenyovka peasantry, come to render the last homage to their master. Young Dubrovsky stood in the chancel; he neither wept nor prayed, but the expression on his face was terrible. The sad ceremony came to an end. Vladimir approached first to take leave of the corpse, after him came the domestics. The lid was brought and nailed upon the coffin. The women wailed loudly, and the men frequently wiped away their tears with their fists. Vladimir and three of the servants carried the coffin to the cemetery, accompanied by the whole village. The coffin was lowered into the grave, all present threw upon it a handful of earth, the pit was filled up, the crowd saluted for the last time and then dispersed. Vladimir hastily departed, got ahead of everybody, and disappeared into the Kistenyovka wood.

Yegorovna, in her master's name, invited the priest and all the clergy to a funeral feast, informing them that her young master did not intend being present.

Then Father Anton, his wife Fedotovna and the deacon set out on foot for the manor-house, discoursing with Yegorovna upon the virtues of the deceased and upon what, in all probability, awaited his heir. The visit of Troyekurov and the reception given to him were already known to the whole neighborhood, and the local politicians predicted that it would have serious consequences.

"What is to be, will be," said the priest's wife: "but it will be a pity if Vladimir Andreyevich does not become our master. He is a fine young fellow, there is no denying that."

"And who is to be our master if he is not to be?" interrupted Yegorovna. "Kirila Petrovich is storming to no purpose — it's no timid soul he has to deal with. My young falcon will know how to stand up for his rights, and with God's help, his friends in high places will stick up for him. Kirila Petrovich is too proud; and yet he did put his tail between his legs when my Grishka cried out to him: 'Be off, you old cur! Clear out of the place!'"

"Oh! Yegorovna," said the deacon, "however could he bring his tongue to utter such words? I think I could more easily bring myself to gainsay the

bishop than look askance at Kirila Petrovich. I shiver and shake at the very sight of him, and my back bends of itself, of itself!”

“Vanity of vanities!” said the priest: “the service for the dead will some day be chanted for Kirila Petrovich, as it was today for Andrey Gavrilovich; the funeral will perhaps be more imposing, and more guests will be invited; but is it not all the same to God?”

“Oh, father, we wanted to invite all the neighborhood, but Vladimir Andreyevich forbade it. To be sure, we have plenty to entertain people with.... but what would you have had us do? At all events, if there are not many people I will treat you well, our dear guests.” This friendly promise and the hope of finding a toothsome pie, caused the talkers to quicken their steps, and they safely reached the manor-house, where the table was already laid and vodka served.

Meanwhile Vladimir advanced further into the depth of the wood, trying to deaden his grief by tiring himself out. He walked on without troubling to keep to the road; the branches constantly caught at and scratched him, and his feet continually sank into the swamp — he observed nothing. At last he reached a small glade surrounded by trees on every side; a little stream wound silently through the trees, half-stripped of their leaves by the autumn. Vladimir stopped, sat down upon the cold turf, and thoughts, each more gloomy than the other, crowded his mind.... He felt his loneliness very keenly; the future appeared to him enveloped in threatening clouds. Troyekurov’s enmity foreboded fresh misfortunes for him. His modest heritage might pass from him into the hands of another, in which case destitution awaited him. For a long time he sat quite motionless, observing the gentle flow of the stream, bearing along on its surface a few withered leaves, and vividly presenting to him a true image of life. At last he noticed that it was growing dark; he arose and began to look for the road home, but for a long time he wandered about the unknown forest before he stumbled upon the path which led straight up to the gate of his house.

There he saw the priest and his companions coming toward him. The thought immediately occurred to him that this foreboded misfortune. He automatically turned aside and disappeared behind the trees. They had not caught sight of him, and they continued talking heatedly among themselves as they passed him.

“Fly from evil and do good,” said the priest to his wife. “There is no need for us to remain here; it does not concern us, however the business may end.”

The priest’s wife made some reply, but Vladimir could not hear what she said.

Approaching the house, he saw a crowd of people; peasants and house serfs filled the courtyard. In the distance Vladimir could hear an unusual noise and the sound of voices. Near the shed stood two *troikas*. On the steps several unknown men in uniform were seemingly engaged in conversation.

“What does this mean?” he asked angrily of Anton, who ran forward to meet him. “Who are these people, and what do they want?”

“Oh, father Vladimir Andreyevich,” replied Anton, out of breath, “the magistrates have come. They are handing us over to Troyekurov, they are taking us from your honor!...”

Vladimir hung his head; his people surrounded their unhappy master.

“You are our father,” they cried, kissing his hands. “We want no other master but you. We will die, but we will not leave you. Give us the order, and we will settle the officials.”

Vladimir looked at them, and strange feelings moved him.

“Keep quiet,” he said to them: “I will speak to the officers.”

“That’s it — speak to them, father,” shouted the crowd: “bring the accursed wretches to reason!” Vladimir approached the officials. Shabashkin, with his cap on his head, stood with his arms akimbo, looking proudly around him. The sheriff, a tall stout man, of about fifty years of age, with a red face and a mustache, seeing Dubrovsky approach, cleared his throat and called out in a hoarse voice:

“And therefore I repeat to you what I have already said: by the decision of the district Court, you now be-

long to Kirila Petrovich Troyekurov, who is here represented by Mr. Shabashkin. Obey all his orders; and you, women, love and honor him, for he is certainly fond of you.”

At this coarse joke the sheriff guffawed, Shabashkin and the other officials following his example. Vladimir was boiling with indignation.

“Allow me to ask, what does all this mean?” he inquired, with pretended calmness, of the jocular police officer.

“It means,” replied the witty official, “that we have come to place Kirila Petrovich Troyekurov in possession of this property, and to request certain others to take themselves off while they can do it in peace.”

“But I think that you could have communicated all this to me first, rather than to my peasants, and announced to the landowner the decision of the authorities — ”

“The former landowner, Andrey Gavrilovich Dubrovsky, died by the will of God; and who are you anyway?” said Shabashkin, with an insolent look. “We do not know you, and we don’t want to know you.”

“Your honor, that is our young master, Vladimir Andreyevich,” said a voice in the crowd.

“Who dared to open his mouth?” said the sheriff ferociously. “What master? What Vladimir Andreyevich? Your master is Kirila Petrovich Troyekurov.... do you hear, you blockheads?”

“Not quite!” said the same voice.

“But this is a revolt!” shrieked the police officer. “Hi, bailiff, come here!”

The bailiff stepped forward.

“Find out immediately who it was that dared to answer me. I’ll teach him a lesson!”

The bailiff turned toward the crowd and asked who had spoken. But all remained silent. Soon a murmur was heard at the back; it gradually grew

louder, and in a minute it broke out into a terrible clamor. The sheriff lowered his voice and was about to try to persuade them to be calm.

“Don’t pay attention to him!” cried the house serfs; “Lay on, lads!” And the crowd lurched forward.

Shabashkin and the others rushed into the vestibule, and locked the door behind them.

“Break in, lads!” cried the same voice, and the crowd pressed forward.

“Hold!” cried Dubrovsky: “idiots! what are you doing? You will ruin yourselves and me, too. Go home all of you, and leave me to myself. Don’t fear, the Czar is merciful: I will present a petition to him — he will not let us be wronged. We are all his children. But how can he stand up for you, if you begin acting like rebels and brigands?”

This speech of young Dubrovsky’s, his resonant voice and imposing appearance, produced the desired effect. The crowd grew quiet and dispersed; the courtyard became empty, the officials kept indoors. Vladimir sadly ascended the steps. Shabashkin cautiously unlocked the door, came out on to the steps and with obsequious bows began to thank Dubrovsky for his kind intervention.

Vladimir listened to him with contempt and made no reply.

“We have decided,” continued the assessor, “with your permission, to remain here for the night, as it is already dark, and your peasants might attack us on the road. Be kind enough to order some hay to be put down for us on the parlor floor; as soon as it is daylight, we will leave.”

“Do what you please,” replied Dubrovsky drily: “I am no longer master here.”

With these words he retired to his father’s room and locked the door behind him.

VI

“AND SO, I’m done for!” said Vladimir to himself, “This morning I had a corner and a piece of bread; tomorrow I must leave the house where I was born. My father, with the ground where he reposes, will belong to that hateful man, the cause of his death and of my ruin!”... Vladimir clenched his teeth and fixed his eyes upon the portrait of his mother. The artist had represented her leaning upon a balustrade, in a white morning dress, with a rose in her hair.

“And that portrait will fall into the hands of the enemy of my family,” thought Vladimir. “It will be thrown into a lumber room together with broken chairs, or hung up in the ante-room, to become an object of derision for his whips; and in her bedroom, in the room where my father died, will be installed his bailiff, or his harem. No, no! he shall not have possession of the house of mourning, from which he is driving me.”

Vladimir clenched his teeth again; terrible thoughts rose up in his mind. The voices of the officials reached him; they were giving orders, demanding first one thing and then another, and disagreeably disturbing him in the midst of his sad meditations.

At last all became quiet.

Vladimir unlocked the chests and boxes and began to examine the papers of the deceased. They consisted for the most part of accounts and business letters. Vladimir tore them up without reading them. Among them he came across a packet with the inscription: “Letters from my wife.” A prey to deep emotion, Vladimir began to read them. They had been written during the Turkish campaign, and were addressed to the army from Kistenyovka. She described to her husband her lonely life and the affairs of the farm, complained with tenderness of the separation, and implored him to return home as soon as possible to the arms of his good wife. In one of these letters, she expressed to him her anxiety concerning the health of little Vladimir; in another she rejoiced over his early intelligence, and predicted for him a happy and brilliant future. Vladimir was so absorbed in his reading, that he forgot everything else in the world as his mind conjured up visions of domestic happiness, and he did not observe how the time was passing: the clock upon the wall struck eleven. Vladimir placed the letters in his pocket, took a candle and left the room. In the parlor the officials were sleeping on the floor. Upon the table were tumblers which they had emptied, and a strong smell of rum pervaded the entire room. Vladimir turned from them with disgust, and passed into the ante-room. The doors were locked. Not finding the key, Vladimir returned to the parlor; the key was lying on the table. Vladimir unlocked the door and stumbled on a man who was crouching in a corner. An ax glistened in his hands. Turning the candle on him, Vladimir recognized Arkhip the blacksmith.

“Why are you here?” he asked.

"Oh, Vladimir Andreyevich, it's you!" Arkhip answered in a whisper. "The Lord save and preserve us! It's a good thing that you had a candle with you."

Vladimir looked at him in amazement.

"Why are you hiding here?" he asked the blacksmith.

"I wanted — I came to find out if they were all in the house," replied Arkhip, in a low faltering voice.

"And why have you got your ax?"

"Why have I got my ax? Can anybody go about nowadays without an ax? These officials are such impudent knaves, that one never knows — "

"You are drunk; drop the ax and go sleep it off."

"I drunk? Master Vladimir Andreyevich, God is my witness that not a single drop of brandy has passed my lips, nor has the thought of such a thing entered my mind. Would the thought of drink enter my mind at a time like this? Was ever such a thing heard of? These clerks have taken it into their heads to rule over us and to drive our master out of the manor-house.... How they snore, the wretches! I'd put an end to the lot and be done with it."

Dubrovsky frowned.

"Listen, Arkhip," said he, after a short pause: "Get such ideas out of your head. It is not the fault of the officials. Light the lantern and follow me."

Arkhip took the candle out of his master's hand, found the lantern behind the stove, lit it, and then both of them softly descended the steps and proceeded down the courtyard. The watchman began beating upon an iron plate; the dogs commenced to bark.

"Who is on the watch?" asked Dubrovsky.

"We, master," replied a thin voice: "Vasilisa and Lukerya."

"Go home," said Dubrovsky to them, "you are not wanted."

"You can quit," added Arkhip.

"Thank you, kind sir," replied the women, and they immediately went home.

Dubrovsky walked on further. Two men approached him: they challenged him, and Dubrovsky recognized the voices of Anton and Grisha.

"Why are you not in bed and asleep?" he asked them.

"This is no time for us to think of sleep," replied Anton. "Who would have thought that we should ever have come to this?"

"Softly," interrupted Dubrovsky. "Where is Yegorovna?"

"In the manor-house, in her room," replied Grisha.

"Go and bring her here, and make all our people get out of the house; let not a soul remain in it except the officials; and you, Anton, get the cart ready."

Grisha departed; a minute afterward he returned with his mother. The old woman had not undressed that night; with the exception of the officials, nobody in the house had closed an eye.

"Are all here?" asked Dubrovsky. "Has anybody been left in the house?"

"Nobody, except the clerks," replied Grisha.

“Bring some hay or some straw,” said Dubrovsky.

The servants ran to the stables and returned with armfuls of hay.

“Put it under the steps — that’s it. Now, my lads, a light!”

Arkhip opened the lantern and Dubrovsky kindled a torch.

“Wait a minute,” said he to Arkhip: “I think, in my hurry, that I locked the doors of the hall. Go quickly and open them.”

Arkhip ran to the vestibule: the doors were open. He locked them, muttering in an undertone: “It’s likely that I’ll leave them open!” and then returned to Dubrovsky.

Dubrovsky applied the torch to the hay, which burst into a blaze, the flames rising to a great height and illuminating the whole courtyard.

“Oh, dear me!” cried Yegorovna plaintively: “Vladimir Andreyevich, what are you doing?”

“Silence!” said Dubrovsky. “Now, children, farewell! I am going where God may direct me. Be happy with your new master.”

“Our father, our provider!” cried the peasants, “we will die — but we will not leave you, we will go with you.”

The horses were ready. Dubrovsky took his seat in the cart with Grisha; Anton whipped the horses and they drove out of the courtyard.

A wind rose. In one moment the whole house was enveloped in flames. The panes cracked and splintered; the burning beams began to crash; a red smoke rose above the roof, and there were piteous groans and cries of “Help, help!”

“Shout away!” said Arkhip, with a malicious smile, contemplating the fire.

“Dear Arkhip,” said Yegorovna to him, “save them, the scoundrels, and God will reward you.”

“Not a chance,” replied the blacksmith.

At that moment the officials appeared at the window, endeavoring to burst the double sash. But at the same instant the roof caved in with a crash — and the cries ceased.

Soon all the peasants came pouring into the courtyard. The women, screaming wildly, hastened to save their effects; the children danced about admiring the conflagration. The sparks flew up in a fiery shower, setting the huts on fire.

“Now everything is right!” said Arkhip. “How it burns! It must be a grand sight from Pokrovskoye.”

At that moment a new sight attracted his attention. A cat ran along the roof of a burning barn, without knowing where to leap down. Flames surrounded it on every side. The poor creature cried for help with plaintive meows; the children screamed with laughter on seeing its despair.

“What are you laughing at, you imps?” said the blacksmith, angrily. “Do you not fear God? One of God’s creatures is perishing, and you rejoice over it.”

Then placing a ladder against the burning roof, he climbed up to fetch the cat. She understood his intention, and, with grateful eagerness, clutched

hold of his sleeve. The half-burnt blacksmith descended with his burden.

“And now, lads, good-bye,” he said to the dismayed peasants: “there is nothing more for me to do here. May you be happy. Do not think too badly of me.”

The blacksmith went away. The fire raged for some time longer, and at last went out. Piles of red-hot embers glowed brightly in the darkness of the night, while round about them wandered the burnt-out inhabitants of Kistenyovka.

VII

THE next day the news of the fire spread through all the neighborhood. All discussed it and made various guesses about it. Some maintained that Dubrovsky's servants, having got drunk at the funeral, had set fire to the house through carelessness; others blamed the officials, who were drunk also in their new quarters. Many maintained that he had himself perished in the flames with the officials and all his servants. Some guessed the truth, and affirmed that the author of the terrible calamity was Dubrovsky himself, urged on by resentment and despair.

Troyekurov came the next day to the scene of the conflagration, and conducted the inquest himself. It transpired that the sheriff, the assessor of the district Court, a solicitor and a clerk, as well as Vladimir Dubrovsky, the nurse Yegorovna, the servant Grisha, the coachman Anton, and the blacksmith Arkhip had disappeared — nobody knew where. All the servants declared that the officials perished at the moment when the roof fell in. Their charred remains in fact were discovered. Vasilisa and Lukerya, said that they had seen Dubrovsky and Arkhip the blacksmith a few minutes before the fire. The blacksmith Arkhip, all asserted, was alive, and was probably the principal, if not the sole author of the fire. Strong suspicions fell upon Dubrovsky. Kirila Petrovich sent to the Governor a detailed account of all that had happened, and a new suit was commenced.

Soon other reports furnished fresh food for curiosity and gossip. Brigands appeared at X. and spread terror throughout the neighborhood. The measures taken against them proved unavailing. Robberies, each more startling than the last, followed one after another. There was no security either on the roads or in the villages. Several *troikas*, filled with brigands, traversed the whole province in open daylight, stopping travelers and the mail. The villages were visited by them, and the manor-houses were attacked and set on fire. The chief of the band had acquired a great reputation for intelligence, daring, and a sort of generosity. Wonders were related of him. The name of Dubrovsky was upon every tongue. Everybody was convinced that it was he, and nobody else, who commanded the daring robbers. One thing was remarkable: the domains and property of Troyekurov were spared. The brigands had not attacked a single barn of his, nor stopped a single cart belonging to him. With his usual arrogance, Troyekurov attributed this exception to the fear which he had inspired throughout the whole province, as well as to the excellent police which he had organized in his villages. At first the neighbors smiled at the presumption of Troyekurov, and everyone expected that the uninvited guests would visit Pokrovskoye, where they would find something worth having, but at last they were compelled to agree and confess that the brigands showed him unaccountable respect. Troyekurov triumphed, and at the news of each fresh exploit on the part of Dubrovsky, he indulged in ironical remarks at the expense of the Governor, the police, and the

company commanders, from whom Dubrovsky invariably escaped with impunity.

Meanwhile the 1st of October arrived, the day of the annual church festival in Troyekurov's village. But before we proceed to describe this solemn occasion, as well as further events, we must acquaint the reader with some characters who are new to him, or whom we merely mentioned at the beginning of our story.

VIII

THE reader has probably already guessed that Kirila Petrovich's daughter, of whom we have as yet said but very little, is the heroine of our story. At the period about which we are writing, she was seventeen years old, and in the full bloom of her beauty. Her father loved her to distraction, but treated her with his characteristic wilfulness, at one time endeavoring to gratify her slightest whims, at another terrifying her by his stern and sometimes brutal behavior. Convinced of her attachment, he could yet never gain her confidence. She was accustomed to conceal from him her thoughts and feelings, because she never knew in what manner they would be received. She had no companions, and had grown up in solitude. The wives and daughters of the neighbors rarely visited Kirila Petrovich, whose usual conversation and amusements demanded the companionship of men, and not the presence of ladies. Our beauty rarely appeared among the guests who feasted at her father's house. The extensive library, consisting for the most part of works of French writers of the eighteenth century, was put at her disposal. Her father, who never read anything except *The Perfect Cook*, could not guide her in the choice of books, and Masha, after having rummaged through works of various kinds, had naturally given her preference to romances. In this manner she went on completing her education, first begun under the direction of Mademoiselle Mimi, in whom Kirila Petrovich reposed great confidence, and whom he was at last obliged to send away secretly to another estate, when the results of this friendship became too apparent.

Mademoiselle Mimi left behind her a rather agreeable recollection. She was a good-natured girl, and had never misused the influence that she evidently exercised over Kirila Petrovich, in which she differed from the other favorites, whom he constantly kept changing. Kirila Petrovich himself seemed to like her more than the others, and a dark-eyed, roguish-looking little fellow of nine, recalling the Southern features of Mademoiselle Mimi, was being brought up by him and was recognized as his son, in spite of the fact that quite a number of bare-footed lads ran about in front of his windows, who were the very spit of Kirila Petrovich, and who were considered house serfs. Kirila Petrovich had sent to Moscow for a French tutor for his little son, Sasha, and this tutor came to Pokrovskoye at the time of the events that we are now describing.

This tutor, by his pleasant appearance and simple manner, produced an agreeable impression upon Kirila Petrovich. He presented to the latter his diplomas, and a letter from one of Troyekurov's relations, with whom he had lived as tutor for four years. Kirila Petrovich examined all these, and was dissatisfied only with the youthfulness of the Frenchman, not because he considered this agreeable defect incompatible with the patience and experience necessary for the unhappy calling of a tutor, but because he had doubts of his own, which he immediately resolved to have cleared up. For

this purpose he ordered Masha to be sent to him. Kirila Petrovich did not speak French, and she acted as interpreter for him.

“Come here, Masha: tell this Monsieur that I accept him only on condition that he does not venture to run after my girls, for if he should do so, the son of a dog, I’ll... Translate that to him, Masha.”

Masha blushed, and turning to the tutor, told him in French that her father counted upon his modesty and orderly conduct.

The Frenchman bowed to her, and replied that he hoped to merit esteem, even if favor were not shown to him.

Masha translated his reply word for word.

“Very well, very well,” said Kirila Petrovich, “he needs neither favor nor esteem. His business is to look after Sasha and teach him grammar and geography — translate that to him.”

Masha softened the rude expressions of her father in translating them, and Kirila Petrovich dismissed his Frenchman to the wing of the house where a room had been assigned to him.

Masha had not given a thought to the young Frenchman. Brought up with aristocratic prejudices, a tutor, in her eyes, was only a sort of servant or artisan; and a servant or an artisan did not seem to her to be a man. Nor did she observe the impression that she had produced upon Monsieur Deforges, his confusion, his agitation, his changed voice. For several days in succession, she met him fairly often, but without deigning to pay him much attention. In an unexpected manner, however, she formed quite a new idea of him.

In Kirila Petrovich’s courtyard there were usually kept several bear-cubs, and they formed one of the chief amusements of the master of Pokrovskoye. While they were young, they were brought every day into the parlor, where Kirila Petrovich used to spend whole hours in amusing himself with them, setting them at cats and puppies. When they were grown up, they were put on a chain, being baited in earnest. Sometimes they were brought out in front of the windows of the manor-house, and an empty wine-cask, studded with nails, was put before them. The bear would sniff it, then touch it gently, and getting its paws pricked, it would become angry and push the cask with greater force, and so wound itself still more. The beast would then work itself into a perfect frenzy, and fling itself upon the cask, growling furiously, until they removed from the poor animal the object of its vain rage. Sometimes a pair of bears were harnessed to a *telega*, then, willingly or unwillingly, guests were placed in it, and the bears were allowed to gallop wherever chance might direct them. But the favorite joke of Kirila Petrovich’s was as follows:

A starved bear used to be locked up in an empty room and fastened by a rope to a ring screwed into the wall. The rope was nearly the length of the room, so that only the opposite corner was out of the reach of the ferocious beast. A novice was generally brought to the door of this room, and, as if by accident, pushed in where the bear was; the door was then locked, and the unhappy victim was left alone with the shaggy hermit. The poor guest, with

torn skirt and scratched hands, soon sought the safe corner, but he was sometimes compelled to stand for three whole hours, pressed against the wall, watching the savage beast, two steps from him, leaping and standing on its hind legs, growling, tugging at the rope and endeavoring to reach him. Such were the noble amusements of a Russian gentleman!

Some days after the arrival of the French tutor, Troyekurov thought of him, and resolved to give him a taste of the bear's room. For this purpose, he summoned him one morning, and conducted him along several dark corridors; suddenly a side door opened — two servants pushed the Frenchman into the room and locked the door after him. Recovering from his surprise, the tutor perceived the chained bear. The animal began to snort and to sniff at his visitor from a distance, and suddenly raising himself upon his hind legs, he advanced toward him.... The Frenchman did not lose his head; he did not run away but awaited the attack. The bear approached; Deforges drew from his pocket a small pistol, inserted it in the ear of the hungry animal, and fired. The bear rolled over. All ran to the spot, the door was opened, and Kirila Petrovich entered, astonished at the outcome of his joke.

Kirila Petrovich wanted an explanation of the whole affair. Who had warned Deforges of the joke, or how came he to have a loaded pistol in his pocket? He sent for Masha. Masha came and interpreted her father's questions to the Frenchman.

"I never heard of the bear," replied Deforges, "but I always carry a pistol about with me, because I do not intend to put up with an offence for which, on account of my calling, I cannot demand satisfaction."

Masha looked at him in astonishment and translated his words to Kirila Petrovich. Kirila Petrovich made no reply; he ordered the bear to be removed and skinned; then turning to his people, he said:

"A capital fellow! There is nothing of the coward about him. By the Lord, he is certainly no coward!" From that moment he took a liking to Deforges, and never thought again of putting him to the proof.

But this incident produced a still greater impression upon Masha. Her imagination had been struck: she had seen the dead bear, and Deforges standing calmly over it and talking tranquilly to her. She saw that bravery and proud self-respect did not belong exclusively to one class, and from that moment she began to show the young man a respect which increased from hour to hour. A certain intimacy sprang up between them. Masha had a beautiful voice and great musical ability; Deforges volunteered to give her lessons. After that it will not be difficult for the reader to guess that Masha fell in love with him without acknowledging it to herself.

IX

ON THE eve of the festival, of which we have already spoken, the guests began to arrive at Pokrovskoye. Some were accommodated at the manor-house and in the wings; others in the house of the bailiff; a third party was quartered upon the priest; and the remainder upon the better class of peasants. The stables were filled with the horses of the visitors, and the yards and coach-houses were crowded with vehicles of every sort. At nine o'clock in the morning the bells rang for mass, and everybody repaired to the new stone church, built by Kirila Petrovich and annually embellished, thanks to his contributions. The church was soon crowded with such a number of distinguished worshipers, that the simple peasants could find no room within the edifice, and had to stand on the porch and within the enclosure. The mass had not yet begun: they were waiting for Kirila Petrovich. He arrived at last in a calèche drawn by six horses, and solemnly walked to his place, accompanied by Marya Kirilovna. The eyes of both men and women were turned upon her — the former were astonished at her beauty, the latter examined her dress with great attention.

The mass began. The home-trained choristers sang in the choir, and Kirila Petrovich joined in with them. He prayed without looking either to the right or to the left, and with proud humility he bowed himself to the ground when the deacon in a loud voice mentioned the name of the builder of *this temple*.

The mass came to an end. Kirila Petrovich was the first to go up to kiss the crucifix. All the others followed him; the neighbors approached him with deference, the ladies surrounded Masha. Kirila Petrovich, on leaving the church, invited everybody to dine with him, then he seated himself in his coach and drove home. All the guests followed him.

The rooms began to fill with the visitors; every moment new faces appeared, and it was with difficulty that the host could be approached. The ladies sat decorously in a semicircle, dressed in antiquated fashion, in gowns of faded but expensive material, and were bedecked with pearls and diamonds. The men crowded round the caviar and the vodka, conversing among themselves with great animation. In the dining-room the table was laid for eighty; the servants were bustling about, arranging the bottles and decanters and adjusting the table-cloths.

At last the house-steward announced that dinner was ready. Kirila Petrovich went in first to take his seat at the table; the ladies followed him, and took their places with an air of great dignity, obeying, to some extent, the rule of seniority. The young ladies crowded together like a timid flock of kids, and took their places next to one another. Opposite to them sat the men. At the end of the table sat the tutor by the side of little Sasha.

The servants began to serve the guests according to rank; in case of doubt, they were guided by Lavater's theories, and almost never made a mistake. The noise of the plates and spoons mingled with the loud talk of

the guests. Kirila Petrovich looked gaily round his table and thoroughly enjoyed the pleasure of being so hospitable a host. At that moment a carriage, drawn by six horses, drove into the yard.

"Who is that?" asked the host.

"Anton Pafnutyich," replied several voices.

The doors opened, and Anton Pafnutyich Spitzyn, a stout man of about fifty years of age, with a round pock-marked face, adorned with a treble chin, rolled into the dining-room, bowing, smiling, and preparing to make his excuses.

"A cover here!" cried Kirila Petrovich. "Pray sit down, Anton Pafnutyich, and tell us what this means: you were not at my mass, and you are late for dinner. This is not like you. You are devout, and you love good cheer."

"Pardon me," replied Anton Pafnutyich, fastening his serviette in the button-hole of his coat: "pardon me, my dear Kirila Petrovich, I started out early, but I had not gone ten versts, when suddenly the tire of the front wheel snapped in two. What was to be done? Fortunately it was not far from the village. But by the time we had arrived there, and had found a blacksmith, and had got everything put to rights, three hours had elapsed. It could not be helped. To take the shortest route through the Kistenyovka woods, I did not dare, so we came the longest way round."

"Ah, ah!" interrupted Kirila Petrovich, "it is evident that you are no dare-devil. What are you afraid of?"

"How, what am I afraid of, my dear Kirila Petrovich? And Dubrovsky? I might have fallen into his clutches. He is a young man who never misses his aim — he lets nobody off; and I am afraid he would have flayed *me* twice over, had he got hold of me."

"Why, brother, such a distinction?"

"Why, dear Kirila Petrovich? Have you forgotten the lawsuit of the late Andrey Gavrilovich? Was it not I who, to please you, that is to say, according to conscience and justice, showed that Dubrovsky held possession of Kistenyovka without having any right to it, and solely through your condescension; and did not the deceased — God rest his soul! — vow that he would settle with me in his own way, and might not the son keep his father's word? Hitherto the Lord has been merciful to me. Up to the present they have only plundered one of my barns, but one of these days they may find their way to the manor-house."

"Where they would find rich booty," observed Kirila Petrovich: "I have no doubt that the little red cash-box is as full as it can be."

"Not so, dear Kirila Petrovich; there was a time when it was full, but now it is quite empty."

"Don't you fib, Anton Pafnutyich. We know you. Where do you spend money? At home you live like a pig, you never receive anybody, and you fleece your peasants. You do nothing with your money but hoard it."

"You are only joking, dear Kirila Petrovich," murmured Anton Pafnutyich, smiling; "but I swear to you that we are ruined," and Anton

Pafnutyich began to chew a greasy piece of pie, to take away the sting of his host's joke.

Kirila Petrovich left him and turned to the new sheriff, who was his guest for the first time and who was sitting at the other end of the table, near the tutor. "Well, Mr. Sheriff, will *you* catch Dubrovsky?"

The sheriff was frightened, bowed, smiled, stammered, and said at last:

"We will do our best, Your Excellency."

"H'm! 'we will do our best!' You have been doing your best for a long time and to no purpose. And, after all, why try to catch him? Dubrovsky's robberies are a blessing to the sheriffs: what with trips and investigations, the money gets into one's pocket. Why do away with such a godsend? Isn't that true, Mr. Sheriff?"

"Perfectly true, Your Excellency," replied the sheriff, in utter confusion.

The guests roared with laughter.

"I like the fellow for his frankness," said Kirila Petrovich: "but it is a pity that our late sheriff is no longer with us. If he had not been burnt, the neighborhood would have been quieter. And what news of Dubrovsky? Where was he last seen?"

"At my house, Kirila Petrovich," said a female voice: "last Tuesday he dined with me."

All eyes were turned toward Anna Savishna Glob-ova, a widow, a rather simple person, beloved by everybody for her kind and cheerful disposition. Everyone prepared to listen to her story with curiosity.

"You must know that three weeks ago I sent my steward to the post with a letter for my Vanyusha. I do not spoil my son, and moreover I haven't the means of spoiling him, even if I wished to do so. However, you know very well that an officer of the Guards must live in suitable style, and I share my income with Vanyusha as well as I can. Well, I sent two thousand rubles to him; and although the thought of Dubrovsky came more than once into my mind, I thought to myself: the town is not far off — only seven versts altogether, please God all will be well. But what happens? In the evening my steward returns, pale, tattered, and on foot. 'What is the matter? What has happened to you!' I exclaimed. 'The brigands have robbed and almost killed me,' he answered. 'Dubrovsky himself was there, and he wanted to hang me, but he afterwards had pity upon me and let me go. But he took away everything I had — money, horse, and cart.' A faintness came over me. Heavenly Lord! What will become of my Vanyusha? There was nothing to be done. I wrote him a letter, telling him all that had happened, and sent him my blessing without a groat. One week passed, and then another. Suddenly, one day, a coach drove into my courtyard. Some general asked to see me: I gave orders for him to be shown in. He entered the room, and I saw before me a man of about thirty-five years of age, dark, with black hair, mustache and beard — the exact portrait of Kulnev. He introduced himself to me as a friend and colleague of my late husband, Ivan Andreyevich. He happened to be passing by, he said, and he could not resist paying a visit to his old friend's widow, knowing that I lived there. I invited

him to dine, and I set before him what God had sent me. We spoke of this and that, and at last we began to talk about Dubrovsky. I told him of my trouble. My general frowned. 'That is strange,' said he: 'I have heard that Dubrovsky does not attack everybody, but only people who are well known to be rich, and that even then he leaves them a part of their possessions and does not rob them of everything. As for murdering people, nobody has yet accused him of that. Is there not some knavery here? Oblige me by sending for your steward.'

"The steward was sent for, and quickly made his appearance. But as soon as he caught sight of the general he stood as if petrified.

"Tell me, brother, in what manner did Dubrovsky rob you, and how was it that he wanted to hang you?' My steward began to tremble and fell at the general's feet.

"Sir, I am guilty. The evil one led me astray. I have lied.'

"If that is so,' replied the general, 'have the goodness to relate to your mistress how it all happened, and I will listen.'

"My steward could not recover himself.

"Well, then,' continued the general, 'tell us where you met Dubrovsky.'

"At the two pine trees, sir, at the two pine trees.'

"What did he say to you?' "

"He asked me who I was, where I was going, and why.'

"Well, and after that?'

"After that he demanded the letter and the money from me, and I gave them to him.'

"And he?'

"Well, and he... forgive me, sir!'

"Well, what did he do?'

"He returned me the money and the letter, and said:' Go in peace, and post this.'"

"Well!'

"Forgive me, sir!'

"I will settle with you, my dear fellow,' said the general sternly. 'And you, madam, order this scoundrel's trunk to be searched, and then give him into my hands; I will teach him a lesson. Remember that Dubrovsky himself was once an officer in the Guards, and would not wish to take advantage of a comrade.'

"I guessed who His Excellency was, but there was no use saying anything. The coachmen tied the steward to the carriage-box; the money was found; the general dined with me, and departed immediately afterwards, taking with him my steward. The steward was found the next day in the wood, tied to an oak, and stripped bare."

Everybody listened in silence to Anna Savishna's story, especially the young ladies. Many of them secretly wished well to Dubrovsky, seeing in him a romantic hero, particularly Marya Kirilovna, an ardent dreamer, steeped in the mysteries and horrors of Mrs. Anne Radcliffe.

“And do you think, Anna Savishna, that it was Dubrovsky himself who visited you?” asked Kirila Petrovich. “You are very much mistaken. I do not know who your guest may have been, but I feel quite sure that it was not Dubrovsky.”

“Not Dubrovsky? How can that be, my dear sir? But who else would stop travelers on the high road and search them?”

“I don’t know; but certainly not Dubrovsky. I remember him as a child; I do not know whether his hair has turned black, but in those days his hair was fair and curly. But I do know for a positive fact, that Dubrovsky is five years older than my Masha, and that consequently he is not thirty-five, but about twenty- three.”

“Exactly, Your Excellency,” observed the sheriff: “I have in my pocket the description of Vladimir Dubrovsky. There it is distinctly stated that he is twenty- three years of age.”

“Ah!” said Kirila Petrovich. “By the way, read it, and we will listen: it will not be a bad thing for us to know what he looks like. Perhaps we may catch a glimpse of him, and if so, he will not escape in a hurry.”

The sheriff drew from his pocket a rather dirty sheet of paper, unfolded it with an air of importance, and began to read in a sing-song manner:

“Description of Vladimir Dubrovsky, based upon the depositions of his former house-serfs:

“Age: twenty-two; height: medium; complexion: clear; beard: shaven; eyes: hazel; hair: light; nose: straight; special marks: none.”

“And is that all?” said Kirila Petrovich.

“That is all,” replied the sheriff, folding up the paper.

“I congratulate you, Mr. Sheriff. A very valuable document! With that description it will not be difficult for you to find Dubrovsky! Who is not of medium height? Who has not light hair, a straight nose and hazel eyes? I would wager that you would talk for three hours at a stretch to Dubrovsky himself, and you would never guess in whose company you were. There is no denying that these officials are clever fellows.”

The sheriff, meekly replacing the paper in his pocket, silently attacked his goose and cabbage. Meanwhile the servants had already gone the round of the guests several times, filling up each one’s glass. Several bottles of Don and Caucasian wine had been opened with a great deal of noise, and had been favorably received under the name of champagne. Faces began to glow, and the conversation grew louder, more incoherent and more lively.

“No,” continued Kirila Petrovich, “we shall never see another sheriff like the late Taras Alexeyevich! He was no blunderhead, no simpleton. It is a pity that the fellow was burnt, for otherwise not one of the band would have got away from him. He would have laid his hands upon the whole lot of them, and not even Dubrovsky himself would have escaped, or bribed his way out. Taras Alexeyevich would surely have taken his money, but he would not have let him go. That was the man’s way. Evidently there is nothing else to be done but for me to take the matter in hand and go after the brigands with my people. I will begin by sending out twenty men to

scour the wood. My people are not cowards. Each of them would attack a bear single-handed, and they certainly would not fall back before a brigand."

"How is your bear, Kirila Petrovich?" asked Anton Pafnutyich, being reminded by these words of his shaggy acquaintance and of certain pleasantries of which he had once been the victim.

"Misha has departed this life," replied Kirila Petrovich: "he died a glorious death at the hands of the enemy. There is his conqueror!" Kirila Petrovich pointed to the French tutor. "You should have an image of the Frenchman's patron saint. He has avenged you — if you will allow me to say so — do you remember?"

"How should I not remember?" said Anton Pafnutyich, scratching his head: "I remember it only too well. So Misha is dead. I am very sorry for Misha — upon my word, I am very sorry! How amusing he was! How intelligent! You will not find another bear like him. And why did *mossoo* kill him?"

Kirila Petrovich began, with great satisfaction, to relate the exploit of his Frenchman, for he possessed the happy faculty of boasting of all that belonged to his entourage. The guests listened with great attention to the story of Misha's death, and gazed in astonishment at Deforges, who, not suspecting that his bravery was the subject of the conversation, calmly sat in his place, occasionally rebuking his restive pupil.

The dinner, which had lasted about three hours, came to an end; the host placed his napkin upon the table, and everybody rose and repaired to the parlor, where coffee and cards were awaiting them, and a continuation of the drinking so famously begun in the dining-room.

X

ABOUT seven o'clock in the evening, some of the guests wished to depart, but the host, merry with punch, ordered the gates to be locked, and declared that he would let no one leave the house until the next morning. Music soon resounded, the doors of the ballroom were thrown open and the dancing began. The host and his intimates sat in a corner, draining glass after glass, and admiring the gaiety of the young people. The old ladies played cards. There were fewer men than women, as is always the case, except where a brigade of Uhlans is stationed, and all the men, suitable for partners, were soon pressed into service. The tutor particularly distinguished himself; he danced more than anyone else; all the young ladies wanted to have him as a partner, finding it very pleasant to waltz with him. He danced several times with Marya Kirilovna, and the young ladies observed them mockingly. At last, about midnight, the tired host stopped the dancing, ordered supper to be served, while he betook himself to bed.

The retirement of Kirila Petrovich allowed the company more freedom and animation. The gentlemen ventured to sit near the ladies; the girls laughed and whispered to their neighbors; the ladies spoke in loud voices across the table; the gentlemen drank, disputed, and laughed boisterously. In a word, the supper was exceedingly merry, and left behind it many agreeable memories.

One man only did not share in the general joy. Anton Pafnutyich sat gloomy and silent in his place, ate absently, and seemed extremely uneasy. The conversation about the brigands had worked upon his imagination. We shall soon see that he had good cause to fear them.

Anton Pafnutyich, in invoking God as a witness that the little red cash-box was empty, had not lied and sinned. The little red cash-box was really empty. The money which it had at one time contained had been transferred to a leather pouch, which he carried on his breast under his shirt. This precaution alone quieted his distrust of everybody and his constant fear. Being compelled to spend the night in a strange house, he was afraid that he might be lodged in some solitary room, where thieves could easily break in. He looked round in search of a trustworthy companion, and at last his choice fell upon Deforges. His appearance — indicative of strength — but especially the bravery shown by him in his encounter with the bear, which poor Anton Pafnutyich could never think of without a shudder, decided his choice. When they rose from the table, Anton Pafnutyich began to circle round the young Frenchman, clearing his throat and coughing, and at last he turned to him and addressed him:

"Hm! hm! Couldn't I spend the night in your room, *mossoo*, because you see —"

"*Que désire monsieur?*" asked Deforges, with a polite bow.

"Ah! what a pity, *mossoo*, that you have not yet learnt Russian, *fe vais moa chez vous coucher*. Do you understand?"

"Monsieur, très volontiers," replied Deforges, *"veuillez donner des ordres en conséquence!"*

Anton Pafnutyich, well satisfied with his knowledge of the French language, went off at once to make the necessary arrangements.

The guests began to wish each other good night, and each retired to the room assigned to him, while Anton Pafnutyich went with the tutor to the wing. The night was dark. Deforges lighted the way with a lantern. Anton Pafnutyich followed him boldly enough, pressing the hidden treasure occasionally against his breast, in order to convince himself that his money was still there.

On arriving at the wing, the tutor lit a candle and both began to undress; in the meantime Anton Pafnutyich was walking about the room, examining the locks and windows, and shaking his head at the disquieting results of his inspection. The doors fastened with only a bolt, and the windows had not yet their double frames. He tried to complain to Deforges, but his knowledge of the French language was too limited for so elaborate an explanation. The Frenchman did not understand him, and Anton Pafnutyich was obliged to cease his complaints. Their beds stood opposite each other; they both lay down, and the tutor extinguished the light.

"Pourquoi vous éteignez; pourquoi vous éteignez?" cried Anton Pafnutyich, conjugating the verb to extinguish, after the French manner. *"I cannot dormir in the dark."*

Deforges did not understand his exclamation, and wished him good night.

"Accursed heathen!" muttered Spitzyn, wrapping himself up in the bedclothes: "he couldn't do without extinguishing the light. So much the worse for him. I cannot sleep without a light — *Mossoo, mossoo*," he continued: *"Je vé avec vous parler."*

But the Frenchman did not reply, and soon began to snore.

"He is snoring, the French brute," thought Anton Pafnutyich, "while I can't even think of sleep. Thieves might walk in at any moment through the open doors or climb in through the window, and the firing of a cannon would not wake him, the beast!"

"Mossoo! mossoo! — the devil take you!"

Anton Pafnutyich became silent. Fatigue and the effect of the wine gradually overcame his fear. He began to doze, and soon fell into a deep sleep. A strange sensation aroused him. He felt in his sleep that someone was gently pulling him by the collar of his shirt, Anton Pafnutyich opened his eyes and, by the pale light of an autumn morning, he saw Deforges standing before him. In one hand the Frenchman held a pocket pistol, and with the other he was unfastening the strings of the precious leather pouch. Anton Pafnutyich felt faint.

"Quest ce que c'est, Mossoo, quest ce que c'est?" said he, in a trembling voice.

"Hush! Silence!" replied the tutor in pure Russian. "Silence! or you are lost. I am Dubrovsky."

XI

WE WILL now ask the reader's permission to explain the last incidents of our story, by referring to the circumstances that preceded them, and which we have not yet had time to relate.

At the station, in the house of the postmaster, of whom we have already spoken, sat a traveler in a corner, looking very meek and patient, which showed him to be a man without rank or a foreigner, that is, a person unable to assert his rights on the post road. His carriage stood in the courtyard, waiting for the wheels to be greased. Within it lay a small portmanteau, evidence of a very modest fortune. The traveler ordered neither tea nor coffee, but sat looking out of the window and whistling, to the great annoyance of the postmistress sitting behind the partition.

"The Lord has sent us a whistler," said she, in a low voice. "How he does whistle! I wish he would burst, the accursed heathen!"

"What does it matter?" said her husband. "Let him whistle!"

"What does it matter?" retorted his angry spouse; "don't you know the saying?"

"What saying? That whistling drives money away? Oh, Pakhomovna, whether he whistles or not, we shall have precious little money anyway."

"Then let him go, Sidorych. What pleasure have you in keeping him here? Give him the horses, and let him go to the devil."

"He can wait, Pakhomovna. I have only three troikas in the stable, the fourth is resting. Travelers of more importance may arrive at any moment, and I don't wish to risk my neck for a Frenchman.... Listen! there you are! Someone is driving up! And at what a rate! Can it be a general?"

A coach stopped in front of the steps. The servant jumped down from the box, opened the door, and a moment afterwards a young man in a military cloak and white cap entered the station. Behind him followed his servant, carrying a small box which he placed upon the window-ledge.

"Horses!" said the officer, in an imperious voice. "Directly!" replied the postmaster: "your pass, if you please."

"I have no pass: I am not going to take the main road.... Don't you recognize me?"

The postmaster began to bustle about and rushed out to hurry the drivers. The young man began to pace up and down the room, went behind the partition, and inquired in a low voice of the postmaster's wife:

"Who is that traveler?"

"God knows!" she replied: "some Frenchman or other. He has been five hours waiting for horses, and has done nothing but whistle the whole time. I am tired of him, drat him!"

The young man spoke to the traveler in French. "Where are you bound for, sir?" he asked.

"For the neighboring town," replied the Frenchman: "and from there I am going to a landed proprietor who has engaged me as tutor without ever

having seen me. I thought I should have reached the place today, but the postmaster has evidently decided otherwise. In this country it is difficult to procure horses, Mr. Officer."

"And who is the landed proprietor about here with whom you have found a position?" asked the officer. "Mr. Troyekurov," replied the Frenchman. "Troyekurov? Who is this Troyekurov?"

"*Ma foi, monsieur*. I have heard very little good of him. They say that he is a proud and wilful gentleman, and so harsh toward the members of his household, that nobody can live on good terms with him: that all tremble at his name, and that with his tutors he stands upon no ceremony whatever, indeed, that he has flogged two of them to death."

"Good Lord! And you have decided to take a position with such a monster?"

"What can I do, Mr. Officer? He offers me a good salary: three thousand rubles a year and all found. Perhaps I shall be more fortunate than the others. I have an aged mother: one half of my salary I will send to her for her support, and out of the rest of my money I shall be able in five years to save a small capital sufficient to make me independent for the rest of my life. Then, *bon soir*, I return to Paris and set up in business."

"Does anybody at Troyekurov's know you?" asked the officer.

"Nobody," replied the tutor. "He engaged me at Moscow, through one of his friends, whose cook is a countryman of mine, and who recommended me. I must tell you that I did not intend to be a tutor, but a confectioner; but I was told that in your country the profession of tutor is more lucrative."

The officer reflected.

"Listen to me," he said to the Frenchman: "What would you say if, instead of this position, you were offered ten thousand rubles, ready money, on condition that you returned immediately to Paris?"

The Frenchman looked at the officer in astonishment, smiled, and shook his head.

"The horses are ready," said the postmaster, entering the room at that moment.

The servant confirmed this statement.

"Presently," replied the officer: "leave the room for a moment." The postmaster and the servant withdrew. "I am not joking," he continued in French. "I can give you ten thousand rubles; I only want your absence and your papers."

So saying, he opened his small box and took out of it several bank notes. The Frenchman stared. He did not know what to think.

"My absence... my papers!" he repeated in astonishment. "Here are my papers... but you are surely joking. What do you want my papers for?"

"That does not concern you. I ask you, do you consent or not?"

The Frenchman, still unable to believe his own ears, handed his papers to the young officer, who rapidly examined them.

"Your passport... very well; your letter of recommendation... let us see; your birth certificate... capital! Well, here is your money; return home.

Farewell.”

The Frenchman stood as if glued to the spot. The officer came back.

“I had almost forgotten the most important thing of all. Give me your word of honor that all this will remain between you and me.... Your word of honor.”

“My word of honor,” replied the Frenchman. “But my papers? What shall I do without them?”

“In the first town you come to, announce that you have been robbed by Dubrovsky. They will believe you, and give you the necessary documents. Farewell: God grant you a safe and speedy return to Paris, and may you find your mother in good health.”

Dubrovsky left the room, got into the coach and dashed off.

The postmaster stood looking out of the window, and when the coach had driven off, he turned to his wife, exclaiming:

“Pakhomovna, do you know who that was? That was Dubrovsky!”

The postmaster’s wife rushed toward the window, but it was too late. Dubrovsky was already a long way off. Then she began to scold her husband.

“You have no fear of God, Sidorych. Why did you not tell me sooner, I should at least have had a glimpse of Dubrovsky. But now I shall have to wait long enough before he looks in on us again. You have no conscience — that’s what it is, no conscience!”

The Frenchman stood as if petrified. The agreement with the officer, the money — everything seemed like a dream to him. But the bundle of bank notes was there in his pocket, eloquently confirming the reality of the wonderful adventure.

He resolved to hire horses to take him to the next town. He was driven very slowly, and he reached the town at nightfall.

Just before they reached the gates where, in place of a sentinel, stood a dilapidated sentry-box, the Frenchman told the driver to stop, got out of the carriage and proceeded on foot, explaining by signs to the driver that he might keep the vehicle and the portmanteau as a tip. The driver was as much astonished at his generosity as the Frenchman himself had been at Dubrovsky’s proposal. But concluding that the foreigner had taken leave of his senses, the driver thanked him with a very profound bow, and not caring about entering the town, he made his way to a house of entertainment which was well known to him, and the proprietor of which was a friend of his. There he passed the whole night, and the next morning he started back on his return journey with the troika, without the carriage and without the portmanteau, but with a swollen face and red eyes.

Dubrovsky, having possessed himself of the Frenchman’s papers, boldly presented himself to Troyekurov, as we have already seen, and settled in the house. Whatever were his secret intentions — we shall know them later on — there was nothing at all objectionable in his behavior. It is true that he did not occupy himself very much with the education of little Sasha, to whom he allowed full liberty, nor was he very exacting in the matter of the

boy's lessons, which were only given as a matter of form, but he paid great attention to the musical studies of his fair pupil, and frequently sat for hours beside her at the piano.

Everybody liked the young tutor: Kirila Petrovich, for his boldness and dexterity in the hunting-field; Marya Kirilovna, for his unbounded zeal and slavish attentiveness; Sasha, for his tolerance; and the members of the household for his kindness and generosity, apparently incompatible with his station. He himself seemed to be attached to the whole family, and already regarded himself as a member of it.

Between the time that he entered upon a tutor's calling and the date of the memorable fête, about a month had elapsed and nobody suspected that the modest young Frenchman was in reality the terrible brigand whose name was a source of terror to all the landed proprietors of the neighborhood. During all this time, Dubrovsky had never quitted Pokrovskoye, but the reports of his depredations did not cease for all that, thanks to the inventive imagination of the country people. It is possible, too, that his band may have continued their exploits during their chief's absence.

Passing the night in the same room with a man whom he could only regard as a personal enemy, and one of the principal authors of his misfortune, Dubrovsky had not been able to resist temptation. He knew of the existence of the pouch, and had resolved to take possession of it.

We have seen how he astounded poor Anton Pafnutyich by his unexpected transformation from a tutor into a brigand.

At nine o'clock in the morning, the guests who had passed the night at Pokrovskoye repaired one after the other to the sitting-room, where the samovar was already boiling, while before it sat Marya Kirilovna in a morning frock, and Kirila Petrovich in a frieze coat and slippers, drinking his tea out of a large cup like a slop-basin.

The last to appear was Anton Pafnutyich; he was so pale, and seemed so troubled, that everybody was struck by his appearance, and Kirila Petrovich inquired after his health. In reply Spitzyn said something unintelligible, glaring with horror at the tutor, who sat there as if nothing had happened. A few minutes afterward a servant entered and announced to Spitzyn that his carriage was ready. Anton Pafnutyich hastened to take his leave of the company, and then hurried out of the room and, in spite of the host's efforts to detain him, drove off immediately. No one could understand what had happened to him, and Kirila Petrovich came to the conclusion that he had over-eaten.

After tea and the farewell breakfast, the other guests began to take their leave, and soon Pokrovskoye grew empty, and life there resumed its ordinary course.

XII

SEVERAL days passed, and nothing remarkable had happened. The life of the inhabitants of Pokrovskoye was monotonous. Kirila Petrovich went out hunting every day; while Marya Kirilovna devoted her time to reading, walking, and especially to music lessons. She was beginning to understand her own heart, and acknowledged to herself with involuntary vexation that she was not indifferent to the good qualities of the young Frenchman. He, on his side, never overstepped the limits of respect and strict decorum, and thereby quieted her pride and her timid doubts. With more and more confidence she gave herself up to the alluring habit of seeing him. She felt dull without Deforges, and in his presence she was constantly occupied with him, wishing to know his opinion of everything, and always agreeing with him. She was not yet in love with him perhaps; but at the first accidental obstacle or sudden adverse move of Fate, the flame of passion was sure to burst forth within her heart.

One day, on entering the parlor, where the tutor awaited her, Marya Kirilovna observed with astonishment that he looked pale and troubled. She opened the piano and sang a few notes; but Dubrovsky, under the pretext of a headache, apologized, interrupted the lesson, and, closing the music-book, immediately slipped a note into her hand. Marya Kirilovna, without pausing to reflect, took it, and immediately repented. But Dubrovsky had gone. Marya Kirilovna went to her room, unfolded the note, and read as follows:

“Be in the arbor near the brook this evening, at seven o’clock: I must speak to you.”

Her curiosity was strongly excited. She had long expected a declaration, both desiring it and dreading it. It would have been agreeable to her to hear the confirmation of what she divined; but she felt that it would have been unbecoming to hear such a declaration from a man who, on account of his position, ought never to aspire to win her hand. She resolved to keep the tryst, but she hesitated about one thing: in what manner she ought to receive the tutor’s declaration — with aristocratic indignation, with friendly admonition, with good-humored banter, or with silent sympathy. In the meantime she kept constantly looking at the clock. It grew dark: candles were brought in. Kirila Petrovich sat down to play at Boston with some of his neighbors who had come to pay him a visit. The clock struck a quarter to seven, and Marya Kirilovna walked quietly out on to the steps, looked round on every side, and then ran into the garden.

The night was dark, the sky was covered with clouds, and it was impossible to see anything at a distance of two paces; but Marya Kirilovna went forward in the darkness along paths that were quite familiar to her, and in a few minutes she reached the arbor. There she paused in order to draw breath and to present herself before Deforges with an air of unhurried indifference. But Deforges already stood before her.

"I thank you," he said in a low, sad voice, "for having granted my request. I should have been in despair if you had not complied with it."

Marya Kirilovna answered him in the words she had prepared beforehand.

"I hope you will not cause me to repent of my condescension."

He was silent, and seemed to be collecting himself.

"Circumstances demand — I am obliged to leave you," he said at last. "It may be that you will soon hear — but before going away, I must have an explanation with you."

Marya Kirilovna made no reply. In these words she saw the preface to the expected declaration.

"I am not what you suppose," he continued, lowering his head: "I am not the Frenchman Deforges — I am Dubrovsky."

Marya Kirilovna uttered a cry.

"Do not be alarmed, for God's sake! You need not be afraid of my name. Yes, I am that unhappy man, whom your father, after depriving him of his last crust of bread, drove out of his paternal home and sent on to the highway to rob. But you need not be afraid, either on your own account or on your father's. All is over.... I have forgiven him; you have saved him. My first bloody deed was to have had him for its victim. I prowled round his house, determining where the fire was to burst out, where I should enter his bedroom, and how I should cut him off from all means of escape; at that moment you passed by me like a heavenly vision, and my heart was subdued. I understood that the house, in which you dwelt, was sacred; that not a single being, connected with you by the ties of blood, could be subject to my curse. I repudiated vengeance as though it were madness. For days on end I wandered around the gardens of Pokrovskoye, in the hope of seeing your white dress in the distance. On your incautious walks I followed you, stealing from bush to bush, happy in the thought that I was protecting you, that for you there was no danger, where I was secretly present. At last an opportunity presented itself.... I came to live in your house. Those three weeks were for me days of happiness; the recollection of them will be the joy of my sad life.... To-day I received news which renders it impossible for me to remain here any longer. I part from you to-day — at this very moment.... But before doing so, I felt that it was necessary that I should reveal myself to you, so that you might not curse me nor despise me. Think sometimes of Dubrovsky. Know that he was born for another fate, that his soul was capable of loving you, that never — "

Just then a low whistle sounded, and Dubrovsky stopped. He seized her hand and pressed it to his burning lips. The whistle was repeated.

"Farewell," said Dubrovsky: "they are calling me. A moment's delay may undo me."

He moved away.... Marya Kirilovna stood motionless. Dubrovsky returned and once more took her hand.

"If misfortune should ever overtake you," he said, in a tender and moving voice, "and you are unable to obtain help or protection from

anybody, will you promise to apply to me, to demand from me everything that may be necessary for your happiness? Will you promise not to reject my devotion?"

Marya Kirilovna wept silently. The whistle sounded for the third time.

"You are ruining me!" cried Dubrovsky: "but I will not leave you until you give me a reply. Do you promise me or not?"

"I promise!" murmured the poor girl.

Greatly agitated by her interview with Dubrovsky, Marya Kirilovna returned from the garden. As she approached the house, she perceived a great crowd of people in the courtyard; a troika was standing in front of the steps, the servants were running hither and thither, and the whole house was in a commotion. In the distance she heard the voice of Kirila Petrovich, and she hastened to reach her room, fearing that her absence might be noticed. Kirila Petrovich met her in the hall. The visitors were pressing round our old acquaintance the sheriff, and were overwhelming him with questions. The sheriff, in traveling clothes, and armed to the teeth, answered them with a mysterious and anxious air.

"Where have you been, Masha?" asked Kirila Petrovich. "Have you seen Monsieur Deforges?"

Masha could scarcely answer in the negative.

"Just imagine," continued Kirila Petrovich: "the sheriff has come to arrest him, and assures me that he is Dubrovsky."

"He answers the description in every respect, Your Excellency," said the sheriff respectfully.

"Oh! brother," interrupted Kirila Petrovich, "go to — you know where — with your description. I will not surrender my Frenchman to you until I have investigated the matter myself. How can anyone believe the word of Anton Pafnutyich, a coward and a liar? He must have dreamt that the tutor wanted to rob him. Why didn't he tell me about it the next morning? He never said a word about the matter."

"The Frenchman scared him, Your Excellency," replied the sheriff, "and made him swear that he would preserve silence."

"A pack of lies!" exclaimed Kirila Petrovich: "I will clear the matter up immediately. Where is the tutor?" he asked of a servant who entered at that moment.

"He cannot be found anywhere, sir," replied the servant.

"Then search for him!" cried Troyekurov, beginning to entertain doubts.

"Show me your vaunted description," he said to the sheriff, who immediately handed him the paper.

"Hm! hm! twenty-three years old, etc., etc. That is so, but yet that does not prove anything. Well, what about the tutor?"

"He is not to be found," was again the answer. Kirila Petrovich began to be uneasy; Marya Kirilovna was neither dead nor alive.

"You are pale, Masha," her father remarked to her: "they have frightened you."

"No, papa," replied Masha; "I have a headache."

“Go to your own room, Masha, and don’t be alarmed.”

Masha kissed his hand and retired hastily to her room. There she threw herself upon her bed and burst into tears, and a fit of hysterics. The maids hastened to her assistance, undressed her with difficulty, and with difficulty succeeded in calming her by means of cold water and all kinds of smelling salts. They put her to bed and she dozed off.

In the meantime the Frenchman could not be found. Kirila Petrovich paced up and down the room, loudly whistling “Thunder of Victory Resound.” The visitors whispered among themselves; the sheriff looked foolish; the Frenchman was not to be found. Probably he had managed to escape through being warned beforehand. But by whom and how? That remained a mystery.

It was eleven o’clock, but nobody thought of sleep. At last Kirila Petrovich said angrily to the sheriff:

“Well, do you wish to stop here till daylight? My house is not an inn. You are not quick enough, brother, to catch Dubrovsky — if he is Dubrovsky. Go home, and in future be a little quicker. And it is time for you to go home, too,” he continued, addressing his guests. “Order the horses to be hitched up. I want to go to bed.”

In this ungracious manner did Troyekurov take leave of his guests.

XIII

SOME TIME elapsed without anything remarkable happening. But at the beginning of the following summer, many changes occurred in the family life of Kirila Petrovich.

About thirty versts from Pokrovskoye was the wealthy estate of Prince Vereysky. The Prince had lived abroad for a long time, and his estate was managed by a retired major. No intercourse existed between Pokrovskoye and Arbatovo. But at the end of the month of May, the Prince returned from abroad and took up residence in his own village, which he had never seen since he was born. Accustomed to social pleasures, he could not endure solitude, and the third day after his arrival, he set out to dine with Troyekurov, with whom he had formerly been acquainted. The Prince was about fifty years of age, but he looked much older. Excesses of every kind had ruined his health, and had placed upon him their indelible stamp. In spite of that, his appearance was agreeable and distinguished, and his having always been accustomed to society gave him a certain adroitness, especially with women. He had a constant need of amusement, and he was a constant victim of ennui.

Kirila Petrovich was exceedingly gratified by this visit, which he regarded as a mark of respect from a man who knew the world. In accordance with his usual custom, he began to entertain his visitor by conducting him to inspect his out-buildings and kennels. But the Prince could hardly breathe in the atmosphere of the kennels, and he hurried out, holding a scented handkerchief to his nose. The old garden, with its clipped limes, square pond and regular walks, did not please him; he liked English gardens and so-called nature; but he praised and admired everything. The servant came to announce that dinner was served, and they went in to dine. The Prince limped, being fatigued after his walk, and already repenting his visit.

But in the reception room Marya Kirilovna met them — and the old roue was struck by her beauty. Troyekurov placed his guest beside her. The Prince was revived by her presence; he became quite cheerful, and succeeded several times in arresting her attention by his curious stories. After dinner Kirila Petrovich proposed a ride on horseback, but the Prince excused himself, pointing to his velvet boots and joking about his gout. He preferred a drive in a carriage, so that he should not be separated from his charming neighbor. The carriage was got ready. The two old men and the beautiful young girl took their seats in it, and they drove off. The conversation did not flag. Marya Kirilovna listened with pleasure to the flattering compliments and witty remarks of the man of the world, when suddenly Vereysky, turning to Kirila Petrovich, asked him what that burnt building was, and whether it belonged to him.

Kirila Petrovich frowned: the memories awakened by the burnt manor-house were disagreeable to him. He replied that the land was his now, but

that formerly it had belonged to Dubrovsky.

“To Dubrovsky?” repeated Vereysky. “What! to the famous brigand?”

“To his father,” replied Troyekurov: “and the father himself was something of a brigand, too.”

“And what has become of our Rinaldo? Have they caught him? Is he still alive?”

“He is still alive and at liberty, and as long as our sheriffs are in league with thieves he will not be caught. By the way, Prince, Dubrovsky paid you a visit at Ar- batovo.”

“Yes, last year, I think, he burnt something down or got away with some loot. Don’t you think, Marya Kirilovna, that it would be very interesting to make a closer acquaintance with this romantic hero?”

“Interesting!” said Troyekurov: “she knows him already. He taught her music for three whole weeks, and thank God, took nothing for his lessons.”

Then Kirila Petrovich began to relate the story of his French tutor. Marya Kirilovna was on pins and needles. Vereysky, listening with deep attention, found it all very strange, and changed the subject. On returning from the drive, he ordered his carriage to be brought, and in spite of the earnest requests of Kirila Petrovich to spend the night, he took his departure immediately after tea. Before setting out, however, he invited Kirila Petrovich to pay him a visit and to bring Marya Kirilovna with him, and the proud Troyekurov promised to do so; for taking into consideration his princely dignity, his two stars, and the three thousand serfs belonging to his ancestral estate, he regarded Prince Vereysky in some degree as his equal.

Two days after this visit, Kirila Petrovich set out with his daughter to call on Prince Vereysky. On approaching Arbatovo, he could not sufficiently admire the clean and cheerful-looking huts of the peasants, and the stone manor-house built in the style of an English castle. In front of the house stretched a green lawn, upon which were grazing some Swiss cows tinkling their bells. A spacious park surrounded the house on every side. The master met the guests on the steps, and gave his arm to the young beauty. She was then conducted into a magnificent hall, where the table was laid for three. The Prince led his guests to a window, and a charming view opened out before them. The Volga flowed past the windows, and upon its bosom floated laden barges under full sail, and small fishing-boats known by the expressive name of “murderers.” Beyond the river stretched hills and fields, and several villages animated the landscape.

Then they proceeded to inspect the pictures bought by the Prince in foreign countries. The Prince explained to Marya Kirilovna their subjects, related the history of the painters, and pointed out the merits and defects of their canvases. He did not speak of pictures in the conventional language of the pedantic connoisseur, but with feeling and imagination. Marya Kirilovna listened to him with pleasure.

They went in to dine. Troyekurov rendered full justice to his host’s wines, and to the skill of his cook; while Marya Kirilovna did not feel at all confused or constrained in her conversation with a man whom she now saw

for the second time in her life. After dinner the host proposed a walk in the garden. They drank coffee in the arbor on the bank of a broad lake studded with little islands. Suddenly music was heard, and a boat with six oars drew up before the arbor. They rowed on the lake, round the islands, and visited some of them. On one they found a marble statue; on another, a lonely grotto; on a third, a monument with a mysterious inscription, which awakened within Marya Kirilovna a girlish curiosity not completely satisfied by the polite but reticent explanations of the Prince. Time passed imperceptibly. It began to grow dark. The Prince, under the pretext of the chill and the dew, hastened to return to the house, where the samovar awaited them. The Prince requested Marya Kirilovna to discharge the functions of hostess in this home of an old bachelor. She poured out the tea, listening to the inexhaustible stories of the charming talker. Suddenly a shot was heard, and a rocket illuminated the sky. The Prince gave Marya Kirilovna a shawl, and led her and Troyekurov onto the balcony. In front of the house, in the darkness, different colored fires blazed up, whirled round, rose up in sheaves, poured out in fountains, fell in showers of rain and stars, went out and then burst into a blaze again. Marya Kirilovna was happy as a child. Prince Vereysky was delighted with her enjoyment, and Troyekurov was very well satisfied with him, for he accepted *tous les frais* of the Prince as signs of respect and a desire to please him.

The supper was quite equal to the dinner in every respect. Then the guests retired to the rooms assigned to them, and the next morning took leave of their amiable host, promising each other soon to meet again.

XIV

MARYA KIRILOVNA was sitting in her room, bent over her embroidery frame before the open window. She did not mistake one skein for another, like Conrad's mistress, who, in her amorous distraction, embroidered a rose in green silk. Under her needle, the canvas repeated unerringly the design of the original; but in spite of that, her thoughts did not follow her work — they were far away.

Suddenly a hand was thrust silently through the window, placed a letter upon the embroidery frame and disappeared before Marya Kirilovna could recover herself. At the same moment a servant entered to call her to Kirila Petrovich. Trembling, she hid the letter under her fichu and hastened to her father in his study.

Kirila Petrovich was not alone. Prince Vereysky was in the room with him. On the appearance of Marya Kirilovna, the Prince rose and silently bowed, with a confusion that was quite unusual in him.

"Come here, Masha," said Kirila Petrovich: "I have a piece of news to tell you which I hope will gladden you. Here is a suitor for you: the Prince seeks you in marriage."

Masha was dumbfounded; her face grew deathly pale. She was silent. The Prince approached her, took her hand, and with a tender look, asked her if she would consent to make him happy. Masha remained silent.

"Consent? Of course she consents," said Kirila Petrovich; "but you know, Prince, it is difficult for a girl to say the word. Well, children, kiss one another and be happy."

Masha stood motionless; the old Prince kissed her hand. Suddenly the tears began to stream down her pale cheeks. The Prince frowned slightly.

"Go, go, go!" said Kirila Petrovich: "dry your tears and come back to us in a merry mood. They all weep when they are betrothed," he continued, turning to Vereysky; "it is their custom. Now, Prince, let us talk business, that is to say, about the dowry."

Marya Kirilovna eagerly took advantage of the permission to retire. She ran to her room, locked herself in and gave way to her tears, already imagining herself the wife of the old Prince. He had suddenly become repugnant and hateful to her. Marriage terrified her, like the block, like the grave.

"No, no," she repeated in despair; "I would rather go into a convent, I would rather marry Dubrovsky..."

Then she remembered the letter and eagerly began to read it, having a presentiment that it was from him. In fact, it was written by him, and contained only the following words:

"This evening, at ten o'clock, at the same place."

XV

THE MOON was shining; the July night was calm; the wind rose now and then, and a gentle rustle ran over the garden.

Like a light shadow, the beautiful young girl drew near to the appointed meeting-place. Nobody was yet to be seen. Suddenly, from behind the arbor, Dubrovsky appeared before her., "I know all," he said to her in a low, sad voice; "remember your promise."

"You offer me your protection," replied Masha; "do not be angry — but it alarms me. In what way can you help me?"

"I can deliver you from the man you detest...."

"For God's sake, do not touch him, do not dare to touch him, if you love me. I do not wish to be the cause of any horror..."

"I will not touch him: your wish is sacred to me. He owes his life to you. Never shall a crime be committed in your name. You must be pure, even though I commit crimes. But how can I save you from a cruel father?"

"There is still hope; perhaps I shall touch him by my tears — my despair. He is obstinate, but he loves me very dearly."

"Do not put your trust in a vain hope. In those tears he will see only the usual timidity and aversion common to all young girls, when they make a marriage of convenience instead of marrying for love. But what if he takes it into his head to bring about your happiness in spite of yourself? What if you are conducted to the altar by force, in order that your life may be placed for ever in the power of an old man?"

"Then — then there will be nothing else to do. Come for me — I will be your wife."

Dubrovsky trembled; his pale face flushed, deeply, and the next minute he became paler than before. He remained silent for a long time, with his head bent down.

"Muster the full strength of your soul, implore your father, throw yourself at his feet; represent to him all the horror of the future that he is preparing for you, your youth fading away by the side of a decrepit and dissipated old man. Tell him that riches will not procure for you a single moment of happiness. Luxury consoles poverty alone, and at that only for a short time, until one becomes accustomed to it. Do not be put off by him, and do not be frightened either by his anger or by his threats, as long as there remains the least shadow of hope. For God's sake do not stop pleading with him. If, however, you have no other resource left, decide upon a cruel explanation; tell him that if he remains inexorable, then — then you will find a terrible protector."

Here Dubrovsky covered his face with his hands; he seemed to be choking. Masha wept.

"My miserable, miserable fate!" said he, with a bitter sigh. "For you I would have given my life. To see you from afar, to touch your hand was for me happiness beyond expression; and when I see before me the possibility

of pressing you to my agitated heart, and saying to you: ‘Angel, let us die’ — miserable creature that I am! I must fly from such happiness, I must put it from me with all my strength. I dare not throw myself at your feet and thank Heaven for an unthinkable, unmerited reward. Oh! how I ought to hate him who — but I feel that now there is no place in my heart for hatred.”

He gently passed his arm round her slender figure and pressed her tenderly to his heart. Confidingly she leaned her head upon the young brigand’s shoulder. Both were silent.... Time flew.

“I must go,” said Masha at last.

Dubrovsky seemed to awaken from a dream. He took her hand and placed a ring on her finger.

“If you decide upon having recourse to me,” said he, “then bring the ring here and place it in the hollow of this oak. I shall know what to do.”

Dubrovsky kissed her hand and disappeared among the trees.

XVI

PRINCE VEREYSKY'S intention of getting married was no longer a secret to the neighbors. Kirila Petrovich was receiving congratulations and preparations were being made for the wedding. Masha postponed from day to day the decisive explanation. In the meantime her manner toward her elderly fiancé was cold and constrained. The Prince did not trouble himself about that; the question of love gave him no concern; her silent consent was quite sufficient for him.

But time was passing. Masha at last decided to act, and wrote a letter to Prince Vereysky. She tried to awaken within his heart a feeling of magnanimity, candidly confessing that she had not the least attachment for him, and entreating him to renounce her hand and even to protect her from the tyranny of her father. She furtively handed the letter to Prince Vereysky. The latter read it alone, but was not in the least moved by the candor of his betrothed. On the contrary, he perceived the necessity of hastening the marriage, and therefore he showed the letter to his future father-in-law.

Kirila Petrovich was furious, and it was with difficulty that the Prince succeeded in persuading him not to let Masha see that he knew of the letter. Kirila Petrovich agreed not to speak about the matter to her, but he resolved to lose no time and fixed the wedding for the next day. The Prince found this very reasonable, and he went to his betrothed and told her that her letter had grieved him very much, but that he hoped in time to gain her affection; that the thought of resigning her was too much for him to bear, and that he had not the strength to consent to his own death sentence. Then he kissed her hand respectfully and took his departure, without saying a word to her about Kirila Petrovich's decision.

But scarcely had he left the house, when her father entered and peremptorily ordered her to be ready for the next day. Marya Kirilovna, already agitated by the interview with Prince Vereysky, burst into tears and threw herself at her father's feet.

"Papa!" she cried in a plaintive voice, "papa! do not destroy me. I do not love the Prince, I do not wish to be his wife."

"What does this mean?" said Kirila Petrovich, fiercely. "All this time you have kept silent as though you consented, and now, when everything is settled you become capricious and refuse to accept him. Don't play the fool; you will gain nothing from me that way."

"Do not destroy me!" repeated poor Masha. "Why are you sending me away from you and giving me to a man that I do not love? Are you tired of me? I want to stay with you as before. Papa, you will be sad without me, and sadder still when you know that I am unhappy. Papa, do not force me: I do not wish to marry."

Kirila Petrovich was touched, but he concealed his emotion, and pushing her away from him, said harshly:

“That is all nonsense, do you hear? I know better than you what is necessary for your happiness. Tears will not help you. The day after tomorrow your wedding will take place.”

“The day after tomorrow!” exclaimed Masha. “My God! No, no, impossible; it cannot be! Papa, hear me; if you have resolved to destroy me, then I will find a protector that you do not dream of. You will see, and then you will regret having driven me to despair.”

“What? What?” said Troyekurov. “Threats! You threaten me? Insolent girl! You will see that I will do something to you that you little imagine. You dare to threaten me! Let us see, who will this protector be?”

“Vladimir Dubrovsky,” replied Masha, in despair.

Kirila Petrovich thought that she had gone out of her mind, and looked at her in astonishment.

“Very well!” he said to her, after an interval of silence; “expect whom you please to deliver you, but, in the meantime, remain in this room — you shall not leave it till the very moment of the wedding.”

With these words Kirila Petrovich went out, locking the door behind him.

For a long time the poor girl wept, imagining all that awaited her. But the stormy interview had eased her soul, and she could more calmly consider the question of her future and what it behoved her to do. The principal thing was — to escape this odious marriage. The lot of a brigand’s wife seemed paradise to her in comparison with the fate prepared for her. She glanced at the ring given to her by Dubrovsky. Ardentlly did she long to see him alone once more and take counsel with him before the decisive moment. A presentiment told her that in the evening she would find Dubrovsky in the garden, near the arbor; she resolved to go and wait for him there.

As soon as it began to grow dark, Masha prepared to carry out her intention, but the door of her room was locked. Her maid told her from the other side of the door, that Kirila Petrovich had given orders that she was not to be let out. She was under arrest. Deeply hurt, she sat down by the window and remained there till late in the night, without undressing, gazing fixedly at the dark sky. Toward dawn she dozed off, but her light sleep was disturbed by sad visions, and she was soon awakened by the rays of the rising sun.

XVII

SHE AWOKE, and all the horror of her position rose up in her mind. She rang. The maid entered, and in answer to her questions, replied that Kirila Petrovich had been to Arbatovo the previous evening, and had returned very late; that he had given strict orders that she was not to be allowed out of her room and that nobody was to be permitted to speak to her; that otherwise, there were no signs of any particular preparations for the wedding, except that the priest had been ordered not to leave the village under any pretext whatever. After giving her this news, the maid left Marya Kirilovna and again locked the door.

Her words hardened the young prisoner. Her head burned, her blood boiled. She resolved to inform Dubrovsky of everything, and she began to think of some means by which she could get the ring conveyed to the hollow in the chosen oak. At that moment a stone struck against her window; the glass rattled, and Marya Kirilovna, looking out into the courtyard, saw little Sasha making signs to her. She knew that he was attached to her, and she was pleased to see him. She opened the window.

"Good morning, Sasha; why do you call me?"

"I came, sister, to know if you wanted anything. Papa is angry, and has forbidden the whole house to do anything for you; but order me to do whatever you like, and I will do it for you."

"Thank you, my dear Sasha. Listen; you know the old hollow oak near the arbor?"

"Yes, I know it, sister."

"Then, if you love me, run there as quickly as you can and put this ring in the hollow; but take care that nobody sees you."

With these words, she threw the ring to him and closed the window.

The lad picked up the ring, and ran off with all his might, and in three minutes he arrived at the chosen tree. There he paused, quite out of breath, and after looking round on every side, placed the ring in the hollow. Having successfully accomplished his mission, he wanted to inform Marya Kirilovna of the fact at once, when suddenly a red-haired, cross-eyed boy in rags darted out from behind the arbor, dashed toward the oak and thrust his hand into the hole. Sasha, quicker than a squirrel, threw himself upon him and seized him with both hands.

"What are you doing here?" said he sternly.

"What business is that of yours?" said the boy, trying to disengage himself.

"Leave that ring alone, red head," cried Sasha, "or I will teach you a lesson in my own style."

Instead of replying, the boy gave him a blow in the face with his fist; but Sasha still held him firmly in his grasp, and cried out at the top of his voice:

"Thieves! thieves! help! help!"

The boy tried to get away from him. He seemed to be about two years older than Sasha, and very much stronger; but Sasha was more agile. They struggled together for some minutes; at last the red-headed boy gained the advantage. He threw Sasha upon the ground and seized him by the throat. But at that moment a strong hand grasped hold of his shaggy red hair, and Stepan, the gardener, lifted him half a yard from the ground.

"Ah! you red-headed beast!" said the gardener. "How dare you strike the young gentleman?"

In the meantime, Sasha had jumped to his feet and recovered himself.

"You caught me under the arm-pits," said he, "or you would never have thrown me. Give me the ring at once and be off."

"It's likely!" replied the red-headed one, and suddenly twisting himself round, he freed his mop from Stepan's hand.

Then he started off running, but Sasha overtook him, gave him a blow in the back, and the boy fell. The gardener again seized him and bound him with his belt.

"Give me the ring!" cried Sasha.

"Wait a moment, young master," said Stepan; "we will take him to the bailiff to be questioned."

The gardener led the captive into the courtyard of the manor-house, accompanied by Sasha, who glanced uneasily at his torn and grass-stained trousers. Suddenly all three found themselves face to face with Kirila Petrovich, who was going to inspect his stables.

"What is the meaning of this?" he said to Stepan.

Stepan in a few words related all that had happened.

Kirila Petrovich listened to him with attention.

"You rascal," said he, turning to Sasha: "why did you get into a fight with him?"

"He stole a ring from the hollow, papa; make him give up the ring."

"What ring? From what hollow?"

"The one that Marya Kirilovna... that ring...." Sasha stammered and became confused. Kirila Petrovich frowned and said, shaking his head:

"Ah! Marya Kirilovna is mixed up in this. Confess everything, or I will give you such a thrashing as you have never had in your life."

"As true as Heaven, papa, I... papa... Marya Kirilovna never told me to do anything, papa."

"Stepan, go and cut me some fine, fresh birch switches."

"Stop, papa, I will tell you all. I was running about the courtyard today, when sister opened the window. I ran toward her, and she opened the window and dropped a ring, not on purpose, and I went and hid it in the hollow, and... and this red-headed fellow wanted to steal the ring."

"She dropped it, not on purpose — you wanted to hide it... Stepan, go and get the switches."

"Papa, wait, I will tell you everything. Sister told me to run to the oak tree and put the ring in the hollow; I ran and did so, but this nasty fellow —

„

Kirila Petrovich turned to the “nasty fellow” and said to him sternly:

“To whom do you belong?”

“I am a house-serf of the Dubrovsky’s,” answered the red-headed boy.

Kirila Petrovich’s face darkened.

“It seems, then, that you do not recognize me as your master. Very well. What were you doing in my garden?”

“Stealing raspberries,” the boy answered with complete indifference.

“Aha! like master, like servant. As the priest is, so is his parish. And do my raspberries grow upon oak trees?”

The boy made no reply.

“Papa, make him give up the ring,” said Sasha.

“Silence, Alexander!” replied Kirila Petrovich; “don’t forget that I intend to settle with you presently. Go to your room. And you, squint-eyes, you seem a clever lad; if you confess everything to me, I will not whip you, but will give you a five-copeck piece to buy nuts with. Give up the ring and go home.”

The boy opened his fist and showed that there was nothing in his hand.

“If you don’t, I shall do something to you that you little expect. Now!”

The boy did not answer a word, but stood with his head bent, looking like a perfect simpleton.

“Very well!” said Kirila Petrovich: “lock him up somewhere, and see that he does not escape, or I ‘ll flay everyone of you.”

Stepan conducted the boy to the pigeon-house, locked him in there, and ordered the old poultry woman, Agafya, to keep a watch upon him.

“There is no doubt about it: she has been in touch with that accursed Dubrovsky. But can it be that she has really asked his help?” thought Kirila Petrovich, pacing up and down the room, and whistling “Thunder of Victory,” angrily — “Perhaps I am hot upon his track, and he will not escape us. We shall take advantage of this opportunity.... Hark! a bell; thank God, that is the sheriff. Bring here the boy that is locked up.”

Meanwhile, a small carriage drove into the courtyard, and our old acquaintance, the sheriff, entered the room, all covered with dust.

“Glorious news!” said Kirila Petrovich: “I have caught Dubrovsky.”

“Thank God, Your Excellency!” said the sheriff, his face beaming with delight. “Where is he?”

“That is to say, not Dubrovsky himself, but one of his band. He will be here presently. He will help us to catch his chief. Here he is.”

The sheriff, who expected to see some fierce-looking brigand, was astonished to perceive a thirteen-year-old lad, of somewhat delicate appearance. He turned to Kirila Petrovich with an incredulous look, and awaited an explanation. Kirila Petrovich then began to relate the events of the morning, without, however, mentioning the name of Marya Kirilovna.

The sheriff listened to him attentively, glancing from time to time at the young rogue, who, assuming a look of imbecility, seemed to be paying no attention to all that was going on around him.

“Will Your Excellency allow me to speak to you privately?” said the sheriff at last.

Kirila Petrovich took him into another room and locked the door after him.

Half an hour afterwards they returned to the hall, where the captive was awaiting the decision respecting his fate.

“The master wished,” the sheriff said to him, “to have you locked up in the town gaol, to be whipped, and then deported as a convict; but I interceded for you and have obtained your pardon. Untie him!”

The lad was unbound.

“Thank the master,” said the sheriff.

The lad went up to Kirila Petrovich and kissed his hand.

“Run away home,” Kirila Petrovich said to him, “and in future do not steal raspberries from oak trees.”

The lad went out, ran merrily down the steps, and without looking behind him, dashed off across the fields in the direction of Kistenyovka. On reaching the village, he stopped at a ramshackle hut, on the edge of the settlement, and tapped at the window. The window was opened, and an old woman appeared.

“Grandmother, some bread!” said the boy: “I have eaten nothing since this morning; I am dying of hunger.”

“Ah! it is you, Mitya; but where have you been all this time, you imp?” asked the old woman.

“I will tell you afterwards, grandmother. For God’s sake, some bread!”

“Come into the hut, then.”

“I haven’t the time, grandmother; I ‘ve got to run on to another place. Bread, for the Lord’s sake, bread!”

“What a fidget!” grumbled the old woman: “there’s a piece for you,” and she pushed through the window a slice of black bread.

The boy bit into it greedily, and went on slowly, chewing as he walked.

It was beginning to grow dark. Mitya made his way along past the barns and kitchen gardens toward the Kistenyovka grove. On arriving at the two pine trees, standing like advance guards before the grove, he paused, looked round on every side, gave a shrill, abrupt whistle, and then listened. A faint and prolonged whistle was heard in reply, and somebody came out of the grove and advanced toward him.

XVIII

KIRILA PETROVICH was pacing up and down the hall, whistling his favorite air louder than usual. The whole house was in commotion; the servants were running about, and the maids were busy. In the coachhouse horses were being hitched up to a carriage. In the courtyard there was a crowd of people. In Marya Kirilovna's dressing-room, before the looking-glass, a lady, surrounded by maidservants, was attiring the pale, motionless young bride. Her head bent languidly beneath the weight of her diamonds; she started slightly when a careless hand pricked her, but she remained silent, gazing absently into the mirror.

"Will you soon be ready?" the voice of Kirila Petrovich was heard at the door.

"In a minute!" replied the lady. "Marya Kirilovna, get up and look at yourself. Is everything right?"

Marya Kirilovna rose, but made no reply. The door was opened.

"The bride is ready," said the lady to Kirila Petrovich; "order the carriage."

"May God be with us!" replied Kirila Petrovich, and taking a sacred ikon from the table, "Approach, Masha," he said, with emotion; "I bless you..."

The poor girl fell at his feet and began to sob.

"Papa... papa..." she said through her tears, and then her voice failed her.

Kirila Petrovich hastened to give her his blessing. She was lifted up and almost carried into the carriage. The matron of honor and one of the maidservants got in with her, and they drove off to the church. There the bridegroom was already waiting for them. He came forward to meet the bride, and was struck by her pallor and her strange look. They entered the cold deserted church together, and the door was locked behind them. The priest came out of the chancel, and the ceremony at once began.

Marya Kirilovna saw nothing, heard nothing; she had been thinking of but one thing the whole morning: she expected Dubrovsky; nor did her hope abandon her for one moment. When the priest turned to her with the usual question, she started and felt faint; but still she hesitated, still she expected. The priest, receiving no reply from her, pronounced the irrevocable words.

The ceremony was over. She felt the cold kiss of her unloved husband; she heard the flattering congratulations of those present; and yet she could not believe that her life was bound for ever, that Dubrovsky had not arrived to deliver her. The Prince turned to her with tender words — she did not understand them. They left the church; in the porch was a crowd of peasants from Pokrovskoye. Her glance rapidly scanned them, and again she seemed unaware of what was going on around her. The newly married couple seated themselves in the carriage and drove off to Arbatovo, whither Kirila Petrovich had already gone on before, in order to welcome the

wedded pair there.

Alone with his young wife, the Prince was not in the least piqued by her cold manner. He did not begin to weary her with amorous protestations and ridiculous enthusiasm; his words were simple and required no answer. In this way they traveled about ten versts. The horses dashed rapidly along the uneven country roads, and the carriage scarcely shook upon its English springs. Suddenly shouts of pursuit were heard. The carriage stopped, and a crowd of armed men surrounded it. A man in a half mask opened the door on the side where the young Princess sat, and said to her:

“You are free! Alight.”

“What does this mean?” cried the Prince. “Who are you that — ”

“It is Dubrovsky,” replied the Princess.

The Prince, without losing his presence of mind, drew from his side pocket a traveler’s pistol and fired at the masked brigand. The Princess shrieked, and, in horror, covered her face with both hands. Dubrovsky was wounded in the shoulder; the blood was flowing. The Prince, without losing a moment, drew another pistol; but he was not allowed time to fire; the door was opened, and several strong hands dragged him out of the carriage and snatched the pistol from him. Above him flashed several knives.

“Do not touch him!” cried Dubrovsky, and his somber companions drew back.

“You are free!” continued Dubrovsky, turning to the pale Princess.

“No!” she replied; “it is too late! I am married. I am the wife of Prince Vereysky.”

“What are you saying?” cried Dubrovsky in despair. “No! you are not his wife. You were forced, you could never have consented.”

“I did consent, I took the oath,” she answered with firmness. “The Prince is my husband; give orders for him to be set at liberty, and leave me with him. I have not deceived you. I waited for you till the last moment... but now, I tell you, now, it is too late. Let us go.”

But Dubrovsky no longer heard her. The pain of his wound, and his violent emotion had deprived him of his strength. He fell against the wheel; the brigands surrounded him. He managed to say a few words to them. They placed him on horseback; two of them supported him, a third took the horse by the bridle, and all withdrew from the spot, leaving the carriage in the middle of the road, the servants bound, the horses unharnessed, but without having done any pillaging, and without having shed one drop of blood in revenge for the blood of their chief.

XIX

IN THE MIDST of a dense forest, in a narrow clearing, rose a small fort, consisting of earthworks and a ditch, behind which were some shacks and mud-huts. Within the inclosed space, a crowd of men who, by their varied garments and by their arms, could at once be recognized as brigands, were having their dinner, seated bareheaded around a common cauldron. On the earthworks, by the side of a small cannon, squatted a sentinel, with his legs crossed under him. He was sewing a patch upon a certain part of his garment, plying his needle with a dexterity that bespoke the experienced tailor, and every now and then glancing round on every side.

Although a certain mug had passed from hand to hand several times, a strange silence reigned among this crowd. The brigands finished their dinner; one after another rose and said a prayer; some dispersed among the shacks, others strolled away into the forest or lay down to sleep, according to the Russian custom.

The sentinel finished his work, shook his garment, gazed admiringly at the patch, stuck the needle in his sleeve, sat astride the cannon, and began to sing a melancholy old song at the top of his lungs:

“Green boughs, do not murmur, be still, Mother Forest, Hinder me not from thinking my thoughts!”

At that moment the door of one of the shacks opened, and an old woman in a white cap, neatly and even primly dressed, appeared upon the threshold,” Enough of that, Styopka,” she said angrily. “The master is resting, and yet you must go on bawling like that; you have neither conscience nor pity.”

“I beg pardon, Yegorovna,” replied Styopka. “I won’t do it any more. Let our good master rest and get well.”

The old woman withdrew into the hut, and Styopka began to pace to and fro upon the earthworks.

Within the shack, from which the old woman had emerged, lay the wounded Dubrovsky upon an army cot behind a partition. Before him, upon a small table, lay his pistols, and a sword above the head of the bed. Rich carpets covered the floor and walls of the mud- hut. In the corner was a lady’s silver toilet set and mirror. Dubrovsky held in his hand an open book, but his eyes were closed, and the old woman, peeping at him from behind the partition, could not tell whether he was asleep or only lost in thought.

Suddenly Dubrovsky started. The fort was roused by an alarm, and Styopka thrust his head in through the window.

“Vladimir Andreyevich!” he cried; “our men are signaling — they are on our track!”

Dubrovsky leaped from his bed, seized his arms and came out of the shack. The brigands were noisily crowding together in the inclosure, but

when he appeared a deep silence fell.

"Is everyone here?" asked Dubrovsky.

"Everyone except the sentries," was the reply.

"To your places!" cried Dubrovsky, and each of the brigands took his appointed place.

At that moment, three of the sentries ran up to the gate of the fort. Dubrovsky went to meet them.

"What is it?" he asked.

"The soldiers are in the forest," was the reply; "they are surrounding us."

Dubrovsky ordered the gate to be locked, and then went himself to examine the cannon. In the wood could be heard the sound of several voices, every moment drawing nearer and nearer. The brigands waited in silence. Suddenly three or four soldiers appeared out of the forest, but immediately fell back again, firing their guns as a signal to their comrades.

"Prepare for battle!" cried Dubrovsky. There was a movement among the brigands, then all was silent again.

Then the noise of an approaching column was heard; arms glittered among the trees, and about a hundred and fifty soldiers dashed out of the forest and rushed with a wild shout toward the earthworks. Dubrovsky applied the match to the cannon; the shot was successful — one soldier had his head torn off, and two others were wounded. The troops were thrown into confusion, but the officer in command rushed forward, the soldiers followed him and jumped down into the ditch. The brigands fired down at them with muskets and pistols, and then, with axes in their hands, they began to defend the earthworks, up which the infuriated soldiers were now climbing, leaving twenty of their comrades wounded in the ditch below. A hand to hand struggle began. The soldiers were already upon the earthworks, the brigands were beginning to give way; but Dubrovsky advanced toward the officer in command, placed his pistol at his breast, and fired. The officer fell over backward. Several soldiers raised him in their arms and hastened to carry him into the forest; the others, having lost their chief, stopped fighting.

The emboldened brigands took advantage of this moment of hesitation, and surging forward, hurled their assailants back into the ditch. The besiegers began to run; the brigands with fierce yells started in pursuit of them. The victory was decisive. Dubrovsky, trusting to the complete confusion of the enemy, stopped his men and shut himself up in the fortress, doubled the sentinels, forbade anyone to absent himself, and ordered the wounded to be picked up.

This last event drew the serious attention of the government to Dubrovsky's exploits. Information was obtained of his whereabouts, and a detachment of soldiers was sent to take him, dead or alive. Several of his band were captured, and from these it was ascertained that Dubrovsky was no longer among them. A few days after the battle we have just described, he had collected all his followers and informed them that it was his intention to leave them for ever, and advised them, too, to change their

mode of life:

“You have become rich under my command. Each of you has a passport with which he will be able to make his way safely to some distant province, where he can pass the rest of his life in ease and honest labor. But you are all rascals, and probably do not wish to abandon your trade.”

Thereupon he had left them, taking with him only one of his men. Nobody knew what became of him. At first the truth of this account was doubted, for the devotion of the brigands to their chief was well known, and it was supposed that they had concocted the story to secure his safety; but after events confirmed their statement. The terrible visits, burnings, and robberies ceased; the roads again became safe. According to another report, Dubrovsky had escaped abroad.

The Plays



The Alexander Pushkin Museum and Memorial Apartment is close to Nevsky Prospekt, Saint Petersburg. The museum is housed in Pushkin's apartment where he lived between 1836 and 1837, and died after being wounded in a duel. Following the outburst of nationwide grief, Pushkin's apartment was carefully preserved.

BORIS GODUNOV



Translated by Alfred Hayes

This play was written in 1825 and originally published in 1831, but it was not approved for performance by the censor until 1866. It concerns the eponymous Russian ruler, who reigned as Tsar from 1598 to 1605. Consisting of 25 scenes and written mostly in blank verse, the play introduces the character Boris Godunov as the most noted member of an ancient, though now extinct, family of Tatar origin, hailing from the Horde to Kostroma in the early 14th century. Godunov was descended from the Tatarian Prince Chet, who went from the Golden Horde to Russia and founded the Ipatiev Monastery in Kostroma. Godunov's career began whilst in the court of Ivan the Terrible and in 1570 he took part in the Serpeisk campaign as an archer of the guard. The following year, he became an oprichnik — a member of Ivan's personal guard and secret police.



Boris Fyodorovich Godunov (1551-1605), who was the de facto regent of Russia from c. 1585 to 1598 and then the first non-Rurikid tsar from 1598 to 1605.

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A scene from the play



Another scene from the play

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

BORIS GODUNOV, afterwards Tsar.
PRINCE SHUISKY, Russian noble.
PRINCE VOROTINSKY, Russian noble.
SHCHELKALOV, Russian Minister of State.
FATHER PIMEN, an old monk and chronicler.
GREGORY OTREPIEV, a young monk, afterwards the Pretender to the throne of Russia.
THE PATRIARCH, Abbot of the Chudov Monastery.
MISSAIL, wandering friar.
VARLAAM, wandering friar.
ATHANASIUS MIKAILOVICH PUSHKIN, friend of Prince Shuisky.
FEODOR, young son of Boris Godunov.
SEMYON NIKITICH GODUNOV, secret agent of Boris Godunov.
GABRIEL PUSHKIN, nephew of A. M. Pushkin.
PRINCE KURBSKY, disgraced Russian noble.
KHRUSHCHOV, disgraced Russian noble.
KARELA, a Cossack.
PRINCE VISHNEVETSKY.
MNISHEK, Governor of Sambor.
BASMANOV, a Russian officer.
MARZHERET, officer of the Pretender.
ROZEN, officer of the Pretender.
DIMITRY, the Pretender, formerly Gregory Otrepiev.
MOSALSKY, a Boyar.
KSENIA, daughter of Boris Godunov.
NURSE of Ksenia.
MARINA, daughter of Mnishek.
ROUZYA, tire-woman of Ksenia.
HOSTESS of tavern.
Boyars, The People, Inspectors, Officers, Attendants, Guests, a Boy in attendance on Prince Shuisky, a Catholic Priest, a Polish Noble, a Poet, an Idiot, a Beggar, Gentlemen, Peasants, Guards, Russian, Polish, and German Soldiers, a Russian Prisoner of War, Boys, an old Woman, Ladies, Serving-women.

*The list of Dramatis Personae which does not appear in the original has been added for the convenience of the reader —
A.H.

PALACE OF THE KREMLIN

FEBRUARY 20th, A.D. 1598

PRINCE SHUISKY and VOROTINSKY

VOROTINSKY. To keep the city's peace, that is the task
Entrusted to us twain, but you forsooth
Have little need to watch; Moscow is empty;
The people to the Monastery have flocked
After the patriarch. What thinkest thou?
How will this trouble end?

SHUISKY. How will it end?
That is not hard to tell. A little more
The multitude will groan and wail, Boris
Pucker awhile his forehead, like a toper
Eyeing a glass of wine, and in the end
Will humbly of his graciousness consent
To take the crown; and then — and then will rule us
Just as before.

VOROTINSKY. A month has flown already
Since, cloistered with his sister, he forsook
The world's affairs. None hitherto hath shaken
His purpose, not the patriarch, not the boyars
His counselors; their tears, their prayers he heeds not;
Deaf is he to the wail of Moscow, deaf
To the Great Council's voice; vainly they urged
The sorrowful nun-queen to consecrate
Boris to sovereignty; firm was his sister,
Inexorable as he; methinks Boris
Inspired her with this spirit. What if our ruler
Be sick in very deed of cares of state
And hath no strength to mount the throne? What
Say'st thou?

SHUISKY. I say that in that case the blood in vain
Flowed of the young tsarevich, that Dimitry
Might just as well be living.

VOROTINSKY. Fearful crime!
Is it beyond all doubt Boris contrived
The young boy's murder?

SHUISKY. Who besides? Who else
Bribed Chepchugov in vain? Who sent in secret

The brothers Bityagovsky with Kachalov?
Myself was sent to Uglich, there to probe
This matter on the spot; fresh traces there
I found; the whole town bore witness to the crime;
With one accord the burghers all affirmed it;
And with a single word, when I returned,
I could have proved the secret villain's guilt.

VOROTINSKY. Why didst thou then not crush him?

SHUISKY. At the time,
I do confess, his unexpected calmness,
His shamelessness, dismayed me. Honestly
He looked me in the eyes; he questioned me
Closely, and I repeated to his face
The foolish tale himself had whispered to me.

VOROTINSKY. An ugly business, prince.

SHUISKY. What could I do?
Declare all to Feodor? But the tsar
Saw all things with the eyes of Godunov.
Heard all things with the ears of Godunov;
Grant even that I might have fully proved it,
Boris would have denied it there and then,
And I should have been haled away to prison,
And in good time — like mine own uncle — strangled
Within the silence of some deaf-walled dungeon.
I boast not when I say that, given occasion,
No penalty affrights me. I am no coward,
But also am no fool, and do not choose
Of my free will to walk into a halter.

VOROTINSKY. Monstrous misdeed! Listen; I warrant you
Remorse already gnaws the murderer;
Be sure the blood of that same innocent child
Will hinder him from mounting to the throne.

SHUISKY. That will not baulk him; Boris is not so timid!
What honour for ourselves, ay, for all Russia!
A slave of yesterday, a Tartar, son
By marriage of Maliuta, of a hangman,
Himself in soul a hangman, he to wear
The crown and robe of Monomakh! —

VOROTINSKY. You are right;
He is of lowly birth; we twain can boast

A nobler lineage.

SHUISKY. Indeed we may!

VOROTINSKY. Let us remember, Shuisky, Vorotinsky
Are, let me say, born princes.

SHUISKY. Yea, born princes,
And of the blood of Rurik.

VOROTINSKY. Listen, prince;
Then we, 'twould seem, should have the right to mount
Feodor's throne.

SHUISKY. Rather than Godunov.

VOROTINSKY. In very truth 'twould seem so.

SHUISKY. And what then?
If still Boris pursue his crafty ways,
Let us contrive by skilful means to rouse
The people. Let them turn from Godunov;
Princes they have in plenty of their own;
Let them from out their number choose a tsar.

VOROTINSKY. Of us, Varyags in blood, there are full many,
But 'tis no easy thing for us to vie
With Godunov; the people are not wont
To recognise in us an ancient branch
Of their old warlike masters; long already
Have we our appanages forfeited,
Long served but as lieutenants of the tsars,
And he hath known, by fear, and love, and glory,
How to bewitch the people.

SHUISKY. (Looking through a window.) He has dared,
That's all — while we — Enough of this. Thou seest
Dispersedly the people are returning.
We'll go forthwith and learn what is resolved.

THE RED SQUARE

THE PEOPLE

1ST PERSON. He is inexorable! He thrust from him
Prelates, boyars, and Patriarch; in vain
Prostrate they fall; the splendour of the throne
Affrights him.

2ND PERSON. O, my God, who is to rule us?
O, woe to us!

3RD PERSON. See! The Chief Minister
Is coming out to tell us what the Council
Has now resolved.

THE PEOPLE. Silence! Silence! He speaks,
The Minister of State. Hush, hush! Give ear!

SHCHELKALOV. (From the Red Balcony.)
The Council have resolved for the last time
To put to proof the power of supplication
Upon our ruler's mournful soul. At dawn,
After a solemn service in the Kremlin,
The blessed Patriarch will go, preceded
By sacred banners, with the holy ikons
Of Donsky and Vladimir; with him go
The Council, courtiers, delegates, boyars,
And all the orthodox folk of Moscow; all
Will go to pray once more the queen to pity
Fatherless Moscow, and to consecrate
Boris unto the crown. Now to your homes
Go ye in peace: pray; and to Heaven shall rise
The heart's petition of the orthodox.

(The PEOPLE disperse.)

THE NEW NUNNERY. The People.

PEASANT WOMAN. (With child.)
Now, what's this? Just when

It ought to cry, the child stops crying. I'll show you!
Here comes the bogie-man! Cry, cry, you spoilt one!
(Throws it on the ground; the child screams.)
That's right, that's right!

1ST PERSON. As everyone is crying,
We also, brother, will begin to cry.

2ND PERSON. Brother, I try my best, but can't.

1ST PERSON. Nor I.
Have you not got an onion?

2ND PERSON. No; I'll wet
My eyes with spittle. What's up there now?

1ST PERSON. Who knows
What's going on?

THE PEOPLE. The crown for him! He is tsar!
He has yielded! — Boris! — Our tsar! — Long live Boris!

THE PALACE OF THE KREMLIN

BORIS, PATRIARCH, Boyars

BORIS. Thou, father Patriarch, all ye boyars!
My soul lies bare before you; ye have seen
With what humility and fear I took
This mighty power upon me. Ah! How heavy
My weight of obligation! I succeed
The great Ivans; succeed the angel tsar! —
O Righteous Father, King Of kings, look down
From Heaven upon the tears of Thy true servants,
And send on him whom Thou hast loved, whom Thou
Exalted hast on earth so wondrously,
Thy holy blessing. May I rule my people
In glory, and like Thee be good and righteous!
To you, boyars, I look for help. Serve me
As ye served him, what time I shared your labours,
Ere I was chosen by the people's will.

BOYARS. We will not from our plighted oath depart.

BORIS. Now let us go to kneel before the tombs
Of Russia's great departed rulers. Then
Bid summon all our people to a feast,
All, from the noble to the poor blind beggar.
To all free entrance, all most welcome guests.

(Exit, the Boyars following.)

PRINCE VOROTINSKY. (Stopping Shuisky.)
You rightly guessed.

SHUISKY. Guessed what?

VOROTINSKY. Why, you remember —
The other day, here on this very spot.

SHUISKY. No, I remember nothing.

VOROTINSKY. When the people
Flocked to the Virgin's Field, thou said'st —

SHUISKY. 'Tis not
The time for recollection. There are times
When I should counsel you not to remember,

But even to forget. And for the rest,
I sought but by feigned calumny to prove thee,
The truelier to discern thy secret thoughts.
But see! The people hail the tsar — my absence
May be remarked. I'll join them.

VOROTINSKY. Wily courtier!

NIGHT

Cell in the Monastery of Chudov (A.D. 1603)

FATHER PIMEN, GREGORY (sleeping)

PIMEN (Writing in front of a sacred lamp.)
One more, the final record, and my annals
Are ended, and fulfilled the duty laid
By God on me a sinner. Not in vain
Hath God appointed me for many years
A witness, teaching me the art of letters;
A day will come when some laborious monk
Will bring to light my zealous, nameless toil,
Kindle, as I, his lamp, and from the parchment
Shaking the dust of ages will transcribe
My true narrations, that posterity
The bygone fortunes of the orthodox
Of their own land may learn, will mention make
Of their great tsars, their labours, glory, goodness —
And humbly for their sins, their evil deeds,
Implore the Saviour's mercy. — In old age
I live anew; the past unrolls before me. —
Did it in years long vanished sweep along,
Full of events, and troubled like the deep?
Now it is hushed and tranquil. Few the faces
Which memory hath saved for me, and few
The words which have come down to me; — the rest
Have perished, never to return. — But day
Draws near, the lamp burns low, one record more,
The last. (He writes.)

GREGORY. (Waking.) Ever the selfsame dream! Is 't possible?
For the third time! Accursed dream! And ever
Before the lamp sits the old man and writes —
And not all night, 'twould seem, from drowsiness,
Hath closed his eyes. I love the peaceful sight,
When, with his soul deep in the past immersed,
He keeps his chronicle. Oft have I longed
To guess what 'tis he writes of. Is 't perchance
The dark dominion of the Tartars? Is it
Ivan's grim punishments, the stormy Council
of Novgorod? Is it about the glory
Of our dear fatherland? — I ask in vain!
Not on his lofty brow, nor in his looks

May one peruse his secret thoughts; always
The same aspect; lowly at once, and lofty —
Like some state Minister grown grey in office,
Calmly alike he contemplates the just
And guilty, with indifference he hears
Evil and good, and knows not wrath nor pity.

PIMEN. Wakest thou, brother?

GREGORY. Honoured father, give me
Thy blessing.

PIMEN. May God bless thee on this day,
Tomorrow, and for ever.

GREGORY. All night long
Thou hast been writing and abstained from sleep,
While demon visions have disturbed my peace,
The fiend molested me. I dreamed I scaled
By winding stairs a turret, from whose height
Moscow appeared an anthill, where the people
Seethed in the squares below and pointed at me
With laughter. Shame and terror came upon me —
And falling headlong, I awoke. Three times
I dreamed the selfsame dream. Is it not strange?

PIMEN. ‘Tis the young blood at play; humble thyself
By prayer and fasting, and thy slumber’s visions
Will all be filled with lightness. Hitherto
If I, unwillingly by drowsiness
Weakened, make not at night long orisons,
My old-man’s sleep is neither calm nor sinless;
Now riotous feasts appear, now camps of war,
Scuffles of battle, fatuous diversions
Of youthful years.

GREGORY. How joyfully didst thou
Live out thy youth! The fortress of Kazan
Thou fought’st beneath, with Shuisky didst repulse
The army of Litva. Thou hast seen the court,
And splendour of Ivan. Ah! Happy thou!
Whilst I, from boyhood up, a wretched monk,
Wander from cell to cell! Why unto me
Was it not given to play the game of war,
To revel at the table of a tsar?
Then, like to thee, would I in my old age
Have gladly from the noisy world withdrawn,

To vow myself a dedicated monk,
And in the quiet cloister end my days.

PIMEN. Complain not, brother, that the sinful world
Thou early didst forsake, that few temptations
The All-Highest sent to thee. Believe my words;
The glory of the world, its luxury,
Woman's seductive love, seen from afar,
Enslave our souls. Long have I lived, have taken
Delight in many things, but never knew
True bliss until that season when the Lord
Guided me to the cloister. Think, my son,
On the great tsars; who loftier than they?
God only. Who dares thwart them? None. What then?
Often the golden crown became to them
A burden; for a cowl they bartered it.
The tsar Ivan sought in monastic toil
Tranquility; his palace, filled erewhile
With haughty minions, grew to all appearance
A monastery; the very rakehells seemed
Obedient monks, the terrible tsar appeared
A pious abbot. Here, in this very cell
(At that time Cyril, the much suffering,
A righteous man, dwelt in it; even me
God then made comprehend the nothingness
Of worldly vanities), here I beheld,
Weary of angry thoughts and executions,
The tsar; among us, meditative, quiet
Here sat the Terrible; we motionless
Stood in his presence, while he talked with us
In tranquil tones. Thus spake he to the abbot
And all the brothers: "My fathers, soon will come
The longed-for day; here shall I stand before you,
Hungering for salvation; Nicodemus,
Thou Sergius, Cyril thou, will all accept
My spiritual vow; to you I soon shall come
Accurst in sin, here the clean habit take,
Prostrate, most holy father, at thy feet."
So spake the sovereign lord, and from his lips
Sweetly the accents flowed. He wept; and we
With tears prayed God to send His love and peace
Upon his suffering and stormy soul. —
What of his son Feodor? On the throne
He sighed to lead the life of calm devotion.
The royal chambers to a cell of prayer
He turned, wherein the heavy cares of state

Vexed not his holy soul. God grew to love
The tsar's humility; in his good days
Russia was blest with glory undisturbed,
And in the hour of his decease was wrought
A miracle unheard of; at his bedside,
Seen by the tsar alone, appeared a being
Exceeding bright, with whom Feodor 'gan
To commune, calling him great Patriarch; —
And all around him were possessed with fear,
Musing upon the vision sent from Heaven,
Since at that time the Patriarch was not present
In church before the tsar. And when he died
The palace was with holy fragrance filled.
And like the sun his countenance outshone.
Never again shall we see such a tsar. —
O, horrible, appalling woe! We have sinned,
We have angered God; we have chosen for our ruler
A tsar's assassin.

GREGORY. Honoured father, long
Have I desired to ask thee of the death
Of young Dimitry, the tsarevich; thou,
'Tis said, wast then at Uglich.

PIMEN. Ay, my son,
I well remember. God it was who led me
To witness that ill deed, that bloody sin.
I at that time was sent to distant Uglich
Upon some mission. I arrived at night.
Next morning, at the hour of holy mass,
I heard upon a sudden a bell toll;
'Twas the alarm bell. Then a cry, an uproar;
Men rushing to the court of the tsaritsa.
Thither I haste, and there had flocked already
All Uglich. There I see the young tsarevich
Lie slaughtered: the queen mother in a swoon
Bowed over him, his nurse in her despair
Wailing; and then the maddened people drag
The godless, treacherous nurse away. Appears
Suddenly in their midst, wild, pale with rage,
Judas Bityagovsky. "There, there's the villain!"
Shout on all sides the crowd, and in a trice
He was no more. Straightway the people rushed
On the three fleeing murderers; they seized
The hiding miscreants and led them up
To the child's corpse yet warm; when lo! A marvel —

The dead child all at once began to tremble!
“Confess!” the people thundered; and in terror
Beneath the axe the villains did confess —
And named Boris.

GREGORY. How many summers lived
The murdered boy?

PIMEN. Seven summers; he would now
(Since then have passed ten years — nay, more — twelve years)
He would have been of equal age to thee,
And would have reigned; but God deemed otherwise.
This is the lamentable tale wherewith
My chronicle doth end; since then I little
Have dipped in worldly business. Brother Gregory,
Thou hast illumed thy mind by earnest study;
To thee I hand my task. In hours exempt
From the soul’s exercise, do thou record,
Not subtly reasoning, all things whereto
Thou shalt in life be witness; war and peace,
The sway of kings, the holy miracles
Of saints, all prophecies and heavenly signs; —
For me ‘tis time to rest and quench my lamp. —
But hark! The matin bell. Bless, Lord, Thy servants!
Give me my crutch.

(Exit.)

GREGORY. Boris, Boris, before thee
All tremble; none dares even to remind thee
Of what befell the hapless child; meanwhile
Here in dark cell a hermit doth indite
Thy stern denunciation. Thou wilt not
Escape the judgment even of this world,
As thou wilt not escape the doom of God.

FENCE OF THE MONASTERY*

*This scene was omitted by Pushkin from the published version of the play.

GREGORY and a Wicked Monk

GREGORY. O, what a weariness is our poor life,
What misery! Day comes, day goes, and ever
Is seen, is heard one thing alone; one sees
Only black cassocks, only hears the bell.
Yawning by day you wander, wander, nothing
To do; you doze; the whole night long till daylight
The poor monk lies awake; and when in sleep
You lose yourself, black dreams disturb the soul;
Glad that they sound the bell, that with a crutch
They rouse you. No, I will not suffer it!
I cannot! Through this fence I'll flee! The world
Is great; my path is on the highways never
Thou'lt hear of me again.

MONK. Truly your life
Is but a sorry one, ye dissolute,
Wicked young monks!

GREGORY. Would that the Khan again
Would come upon us, or Lithuania rise
Once more in insurrection. Good! I would then
Cross swords with them! Or what if the tsarevich
Should suddenly arise from out the grave,
Should cry, "Where are ye, children, faithful servants?
Help me against Boris, against my murderer!
Seize my foe, lead him to me!"

MONK. Enough, my friend,
Of empty babble. We cannot raise the dead.
No, clearly it was fated otherwise
For the tsarevich — But hearken; if you wish
To do a thing, then do it.

GREGORY. What to do?

MONK. If I were young as thou, if these grey hairs
Had not already streaked my beard — Dost take me?

GREGORY. Not I.

MONK. Hearken; our folk are dull of brain,
Easy of faith, and glad to be amazed
By miracles and novelties. The boyars
Remember Godunov as erst he was,
Peer to themselves; and even now the race
Of the old Varyags is loved by all. Thy years
Match those of the tsarevich. If thou hast
Cunning and hardihood — Dost take me now?

GREGORY. I take thee.

MONK. Well, what say'st thou?

GREGORY. 'Tis resolved.
I am Dimitry, I tsarevich!

MONK. Give me
Thy hand, my bold young friend. Thou shalt be tsar!

PALACE OF THE PATRIARCH

PATRIARCH, ABBOT of the Chudov Monastery

PATRIARCH. And he has run away, Father Abbot?

ABBOT. He has run away, holy sovereign, now three days ago.

PATRIARCH. Accursed rascal! What is his origin?

ABBOT. Of the family of the Otrepievs, of the lower nobility of Galicia; in his youth he took the tonsure, no one knows where, lived at Suzdal, in the Ephimievsky monastery, departed from there, wandered to various convents, finally arrived at my Chudov fraternity; but I, seeing that he was still young and inexperienced, entrusted him at the outset to Father Pimen, an old man, kind and humble. And he was very learned, read our chronicle, composed canons for the holy brethren; but, to be sure, instruction was not given to him from the Lord God —

PATRIARCH. Ah, those learned fellows! What a thing to say, “I shall be tsar in Moscow.” Ah, he is a vessel of the devil! However, it is no use even to report to the tsar about this; why disquiet our father sovereign? It will be enough to give information about his flight to the Secretary Smirnov or the Secretary Ephimiev. What a heresy: “I shall be tsar in Moscow!”... Catch, catch the fawning villain, and send him to Solovetsky to perpetual penance. But this — is it not heresy, Father Abbot?

ABBOT. Heresy, holy Patriarch; downright heresy.

PALACE OF THE TSAR

Two Attendants

1ST ATTENDANT. Where is the sovereign?

2ND ATTENDANT. In his bed-chamber,
Where he is closeted with some magician.

1ST ATTENDANT. Ay; that's the kind of intercourse he loves;
Sorcerers, fortune-tellers, necromancers.
Ever he seeks to dip into the future,
Just like some pretty girl. Fain would I know
What 'tis he would foretell.

2ND ATTENDANT. Well, here he comes.
Will it please you question him?

1ST ATTENDANT. How grim he looks!

(Exeunt.)

TSAR. (Enters.) I have attained the highest power. Six years
Already have I reigned in peace; but joy
Dwells not within my soul. Even so in youth
We greedily desire the joys of love,
But only quell the hunger of the heart
With momentary possession. We grow cold,
Grow weary and oppressed! In vain the wizards
Promise me length of days, days of dominion
Immune from treachery — not power, not life
Gladden me; I forebode the wrath of Heaven
And woe. For me no happiness. I thought
To satisfy my people in contentment,
In glory, gain their love by generous gifts,
But I have put away that empty hope;
The power that lives is hateful to the mob, —
Only the dead they love. We are but fools
When our heart vibrates to the people's groans
And passionate wailing. Lately on our land
God sent a famine; perishing in torments
The people uttered moan. The granaries
I made them free of, scattered gold among them,
Found labour for them; furious for my pains
They cursed me! Next, a fire consumed their homes;
I built for them new dwellings; then forsooth

They blamed me for the fire! Such is the mob,
Such is its judgment! Seek its love, indeed!
I thought within my family to find
Solace; I thought to make my daughter happy
By wedlock. Like a tempest Death took off
Her bridegroom — and at once a stealthy rumour
Pronounced me guilty of my daughter's grief —
Me, me, the hapless father! Whoso dies,
I am the secret murderer of all;
I hastened Feodor's end, 'twas I that poisoned
My sister-queen, the lowly nun — all I!
Ah! Now I feel it; naught can give us peace
Mid worldly cares, nothing save only conscience!
Healthy she triumphs over wickedness,
Over dark slander; but if in her be found
A single casual stain, then misery.
With what a deadly sore my soul doth smart;
My heart, with venom filled, doth like a hammer
Beat in mine ears reproach; all things revolt me,
And my head whirls, and in my eyes are children
Dripping with blood; and gladly would I flee,
But nowhere can find refuge — horrible!
Pitiful he whose conscience is unclean!

TAVERN ON THE LITHUANIAN FRONTIER

MISSAIL and VARLAAM, wandering friars; GREGORY in secular attire; HOSTESS

HOSTESS. With what shall I regale you, my reverend honoured guests?

VARLAAM. With what God sends, little hostess. Have you no wine?

HOSTESS. As if I had not, my fathers! I will bring it at once. (Exit.)

MISSAIL. Why so glum, comrade? Here is that very Lithuanian frontier which you so wished to reach.

GREGORY. Until I shall be in Lithuania, till then I shall not Be content.

VARLAAM. What is it that makes you so fond of Lithuania! Here are we, Father Missail and I, a sinner, when we fled from the monastery, then we cared for nothing. Was it Lithuania, was it Russia, was it fiddle, was it dulcimer? All the same for us, if only there was wine. That's the main thing!

MISSAIL. Well said, Father Varlaam.

HOSTESS. (Enters.)
There you are, my fathers. Drink to your health.

MISSAIL. Thanks, my good friend. God bless thee. (The monks drink. Varlaam trolls a ditty: "Thou passest by, my dear," etc.) (To GREGORY) Why don't you join in the song? Not even join in the song?

GREGORY. I don't wish to.

MISSAIL. Everyone to his liking —

VARLAAM. But a tipsy man's in Heaven.* Father Missail! We will drink a glass to our hostess. (Sings: "Where the brave lad in durance," etc.) Still, Father Missail, when I am drinking, then I don't like sober men; tipsiness is one thing — but pride quite another. If you want to live as we do, you are welcome. No? — then take

yourself off, away with you; a mountebank is no companion for a priest.

[*The Russian text has here a play on the words which cannot be satisfactorily rendered into English.]

GREGORY. Drink, and keep your thoughts to yourself,*
Father Varlaam! You see, I too sometimes know how to make puns.

[*The Russian text has here a play on the words which cannot be satisfactorily rendered into English.]

VARLAAM. But why should I keep my thoughts to myself?

MISSAIL. Let him alone, Father Varlaam.

VARLAAM. But what sort of a fasting man is he? Of his own accord he attached himself as a companion to us; no one knows who he is, no one knows whence he comes — and yet he gives himself grand airs; perhaps he has a close acquaintance with the pillory. (Drinks and sings: “A young monk took the tonsure,” etc.)

GREGORY. (To HOSTESS.) Whither leads this road?

HOSTESS. To Lithuania, my dear, to the Luyov mountains.

GREGORY. And is it far to the Luyov mountains?

HOSTESS. Not far; you might get there by evening, but for the tsar’s frontier barriers, and the captains of the guard.

GREGORY. What say you? Barriers! What means this?

HOSTESS. Someone has escaped from Moscow, and orders have been given to detain and search everyone.

GREGORY. (Aside.) Here’s a pretty mess!

VARLAAM. Hallo, comrade! You’ve been making up to mine hostess. To be sure you don’t want vodka, but you want a young woman. All right, brother, all right! Everyone has his own ways, and Father Missail and I have only one thing which we care for — we drink to the bottom, we drink; turn it upside down, and knock at the bottom.

MISSAIL. Well said, Father Varlaam.

GREGORY. (To Hostess.) Whom do they want? Who escaped from Moscow?

HOSTESS. God knows; a thief perhaps, a robber. But here even good folk are worried now. And what will come of it? Nothing. They will not catch the old devil; as if there were no other road into Lithuania than the highway! Just turn to the left from here, then by the pinewood or by the footpath as far as the chapel on the Chekansky brook, and then straight across the marsh to Khlopin, and thence to Zakhariev, and then any child will guide you to the Luyov mountains. The only good of these inspectors is to worry passers-by and rob us poor folk. (A noise is heard.) What's that? Ah, there they are, curse them! They are going their rounds.

GREGORY. Hostess! Is there another room in the cottage?

HOSTESS. No, my dear; I should be glad myself to hide. But they are only pretending to go their rounds; but give them wine and bread, and Heaven knows what — May perdition take them, the accursed ones! May —

(Enter OFFICERS.)

OFFICERS. Good health to you, mine hostess!

HOSTESS. You are kindly welcome, dear guests.

AN OFFICER. (To another.) Ha, there's drinking going on here; we shall get something here. (To the Monks.) Who are you?

VARLAAM. We — are two old clerics, humble monks; we are going from village to village, and collecting Christian alms for the monastery.

OFFICER. (To GREGORY.) And thou?

MISSAIL. Our comrade.

GREGORY. A layman from the suburb; I have conducted the old men as far as the frontier; from here I am going to my own home.

MISSAIL. So you have changed your mind?

GREGORY. (Sotto voce.) Be silent.

OFFICER. Hostess, bring some more wine, and we will drink here a little and talk a little with these old men.

2ND OFFICER. (Sotto voce.) Yon lad, it appears, is poor; there's nothing to be got out of him; on the other hand the old men —

1ST OFFICER. Be silent; we shall come to them presently. — Well, my fathers, how are you getting on?

VARLAAM. Badly, my sons, badly! The Christians have now turned stingy; they love their money; they hide their money. They give little to God. The people of the world have become great sinners. They have all devoted themselves to commerce, to earthly cares; they think of worldly wealth, not of the salvation of the soul. You walk and walk; you beg and beg; sometimes in three days begging will not bring you three half-pence. What a sin! A week goes by; another week; you look into your bag, and there is so little in it that you are ashamed to show yourself at the monastery. What are you to do? From very sorrow you drink away what is left; a real calamity! Ah, it is bad! It seems our last days have come —

HOSTESS. (Weeps.) God pardon and save you!
(During the course of VARLAAM'S speech the 1st OFFICER watches MISSAIL significantly.)

1ST OFFICER. Alexis! Have you the tsar's edict with you?

2ND OFFICER. I have it.

1ST OFFICER. Give it here.

MISSAIL. Why do you look at me so fixedly?

1ST OFFICER. This is why; from Moscow there has fled a certain wicked heretic — Grishka Otrepiev. Have you heard this?

MISSAIL. I have not heard it.

OFFICER. Not heard it? Very good. And the tsar has ordered to arrest and hang the fugitive heretic. Do you know this?

MISSAIL. I do not know it.

OFFICER. (To VARLAAM.) Do you know how to read?

VARLAAM. In my youth I knew how, but I have forgotten.

OFFICER. (To MISSAIL.) And thou?

MISSAIL. God has not made me wise.

OFFICER. So then here's the tsar's edict.

MISSAIL. What do I want it for?

OFFICER. It seems to me that this fugitive heretic, thief, swindler, is — thou.

MISSAIL. I? Good gracious! What are you talking about?

OFFICER. Stay! Hold the doors. Then we shall soon get at the truth.

HOSTESS. O the cursed tormentors! Not to leave even the old man in peace!

OFFICER. Which of you here is a scholar?

GREGORY. (Comes forward.) I am a scholar!

OFFICER. Oh, indeed! And from whom did you learn?

GREGORY. From our sacristan.

OFFICER (Gives him the edict.) Read it aloud.

GREGORY. (Reads.) "An unworthy monk of the Monastery Of Chudov, Gregory, of the family of Otrepiev, has fallen into heresy, taught by the devil, and has dared to vex the holy brotherhood by all kinds of iniquities and acts of lawlessness. And, according to information, it has been shown that he, the accursed Grishka, has fled to the Lithuanian frontier."

OFFICER. (To MISSAIL.) How can it be anyone but you?

GREGORY. “And the tsar has commanded to arrest him — ”

OFFICER. And to hang!

GREGORY. It does not say here “to hang.”

OFFICER. Thou liest. What is meant is not always put into writing. Read: to arrest and to hang.

GREGORY. “And to hang. And the age of the thief Grishka” (looking at VARLAAM) “about fifty, and his height medium; he has a bald head, grey beard, fat belly.”

(All glance at VARLAAM.)

1ST OFFICER. My lads! Here is Grishka! Hold him! Bind him! I never thought to catch him so quickly.

VARLAAM. (Snatching the paper.) Hands off, my lads! What sort of a Grishka am I? What! Fifty years old, grey beard, fat belly! No, brother. You’re too young to play off tricks on me. I have not read for a long time and I make it out badly, but I shall manage to make it out, as it’s a hanging matter. (Spells it out.) “And his age twenty.” Why, brother, where does it say fifty? — Do you see — twenty?

2ND OFFICER. Yes, I remember, twenty; even so it was told us.

1ST OFFICER. (To GREGORY.) Then, evidently, you like a joke, brother.

(During the reading GREGORY stands with downcast head, and his hand in his breast.)

VARLAAM. (Continues.) “And in stature he is small, chest broad, one arm shorter than the other, blue eyes, red hair, a wart on his cheek, another on his forehead.” Then is it not you, my friend?

(GREGORY suddenly draws a dagger; all give way before him; he dashes through the window.)

OFFICERS. Hold him! Hold him!

(All run out in disorder.)

MOSCOW. SHUISKY'S HOUSE

SHUISKY. A number of Guests. Supper

SHUISKY. More wine! Now, my dear guests.

(He rises; all rise after him.)

The final draught!
Read the prayer, boy.

Boy. Lord of the heavens, Who art
Eternally and everywhere, accept
The prayer of us Thy servants. For our monarch,
By Thee appointed, for our pious tsar,
Of all good Christians autocrat, we pray.
Preserve him in the palace, on the field
Of battle, on his nightly couch; grant to him
Victory o'er his foes; from sea to sea
May he be glorified; may all his house
Blossom with health, and may its precious branches
O'ershadow all the earth; to us, his slaves,
May he, as heretofore, be generous.
Gracious, long-suffering, and may the founts
Of his unfailing wisdom flow upon us;
Raising the royal cup, Lord of the heavens,
For this we pray.

SHUISKY. (Drinks.) Long live our mighty sovereign!
Farewell, dear guests. I thank you that ye scorned not
My bread and salt. Farewell; good-night.

(Exeunt Guests: he conducts them to the door.)

PUSHKIN. Hardly could they tear themselves away; indeed,
Prince Vassily Ivanovitch, I began to think that we
should not succeed in getting any private talk.

SHUISKY. (To the Servants.) You there, why do you stand
Gaping? Always eavesdropping on gentlemen! Clear
the table, and then be off.

(Exeunt Servants.)

What is it, Athanasius
Mikailovitch?

PUSHKIN. Such a wondrous thing!
A message was sent here to me today
From Cracow by my nephew Gabriel Pushkin.

SHUISKY. Well?

PUSHKIN. 'Tis strange news my nephew writes. The son
Of the Terrible — But stay —

(Goes to the door and examines it.)

The royal boy,
Who murdered was by order of Boris —

SHUISKY. But these are no new tidings.

PUSHKIN. Wait a little;
Dimitry lives.

SHUISKY. So that's it! News indeed!
Dimitry living! — Really marvelous!
And is that all?

PUSHKIN. Pray listen to the end;
Whoe'er he be, whether he be Dimitry
Rescued, or else some spirit in his shape,
Some daring rogue, some insolent pretender,
In any case Dimitry has appeared.

SHUISKY. It cannot be.

PUSHKIN. Pushkin himself beheld him
When first he reached the court, and through the ranks
Of Lithuanian gentlemen went straight
Into the secret chamber of the king.

SHUISKY. What kind of man? Whence comes he?

PUSHKIN. No one knows.
'Tis known that he was Vishnevetsky's servant;
That to a ghostly father on a bed
Of sickness he disclosed himself; possessed
Of this strange secret, his proud master nursed him,
From his sick bed upraised him, and straightway
Took him to Sigismund.

SHUISKY. And what say men
Of this bold fellow?

PUSHKIN. 'Tis said that he is wise,
Affable, cunning, popular with all men.
He has bewitched the fugitives from Moscow,
The Catholic priests see eye to eye with him.
The King caresses him, and, it is said,
Has promised help.

SHUISKY. All this is such a medley
That my head whirls. Brother, beyond all doubt
This man is a pretender, but the danger
Is, I confess, not slight. This is grave news!
And if it reach the people, then there'll be
A mighty tempest.

PUSHKIN. Such a storm that hardly
Will Tsar Boris contrive to keep the crown
Upon his clever head; and losing it
Will get but his deserts! He governs us
As did the tsar Ivan of evil memory.
What profits it that public executions
Have ceased, that we no longer sing in public
Hymns to Christ Jesus on the field of blood;
That we no more are burnt in public places,
Or that the tsar no longer with his sceptre
Rakes in the ashes? Is there any safety
In our poor life? Each day disgrace awaits us;
The dungeon or Siberia, cowl or fetters,
And then in some deaf nook a starving death,
Or else the halter. Where are the most renowned
Of all our houses, where the Sitsky princes,
Where are the Shestunovs, where the Romanovs,
Hope of our fatherland? Imprisoned, tortured,
In exile. Do but wait, and a like fate
Will soon be thine. Think of it! Here at home,
Just as in Lithuania, we're beset
By treacherous slaves — and tongues are ever ready
For base betrayal, thieves bribed by the State.
We hang upon the word of the first servant
Whom we may please to punish. Then he bethought him
To take from us our privilege of hiring
Our serfs at will; we are no longer masters
Of our own lands. Presume not to dismiss
An idler. Willy nilly, thou must feed him!

Presume not to outbid a man in hiring
A labourer, or you will find yourself
In the Court's clutches. — Was such an evil heard of
Even under tsar Ivan? And are the people
The better off? Ask them. Let the pretender
But promise them the old free right of transfer,
Then there'll be sport.

SHUISKY. Thou'rt right; but be advised;
Of this, of all things, for a time we'll speak
No word.

PUSHKIN. Assuredly, keep thine own counsel.
Thou art — a person of discretion; always
I am glad to commune with thee; and if aught
At any time disturbs me, I endure not
To keep it from thee; and, truth to tell, thy mead
And velvet ale today have so untied
My tongue...Farewell then, prince.

SHUISKY. Brother, farewell.
Farewell, my brother, till we meet again.

(He escorts PUSHKIN out.)

PALACE OF THE TSAR

The TSAREVICH is drawing a map. The TSAREVNA. The NURSE of the Tsarevna

KSENIA. (Kisses a portrait.) My dear bridegroom, comely son of a king, not to me wast thou given, not to thy affianced bride, but to a dark sepulchre in a strange land; never shall I take comfort, ever shall I weep for thee.

NURSE. Eh, tsarevna! A maiden weeps as the dew falls: the sun will rise, will dry the dew. Thou wilt have another bridegroom — and handsome and affable. My charming child, thou wilt learn to love him, thou wilt forget Ivan the king's son.

KSENIA. Nay, nurse, I will be true to him even in death.

(Boris enters.)

TSAR. What, Ksenia? What, my sweet one? In thy girlhood
Already a woe-stricken widow, ever
Bewailing thy dead bridegroom! Fate forbade me
To be the author of thy bliss. Perchance
I angered Heaven; it was not mine to compass
Thy happiness. Innocent one, for what
Art thou a sufferer? And thou, my son,
With what art thou employed? What's this?

FEODOR. A chart
Of all the land of Muscovy; our tsardom
From end to end. Here you see; there is Moscow,
There Novgorod, there Astrakhan. Here lies
The sea, here the dense forest tract of Perm,
And here Siberia.

TSAR. And what is this
Which makes a winding pattern here?

FEODOR. That is
The Volga.

TSAR. Very good! Here's the sweet fruit
Of learning. One can view as from the clouds
Our whole dominion at a glance; its frontiers,

Its towns, its rivers. Learn, my son; 'tis science
Which gives to us an abstract of the events
Of our swift-flowing life. Some day, perchance
Soon, all the lands which thou so cunningly
Today hast drawn on paper, all will come
Under thy hand. Learn, therefore; and more smoothly,
More clearly wilt thou take, my son, upon thee
The cares of state.

(SEMYON Godunov enters.)

But there comes Godunov
Bringing reports to me. (To KSENIA.) Go to thy chamber
Dearest; farewell, my child; God comfort thee.

(Exeunt KSENIA and NURSE.)

What news hast thou for me, Semyon Nikitich?

SEMYON G. Today at dawn the butler of Prince Shuisky
And Pushkin's servant brought me information.

TSAR. Well?

SEMYON G. In the first place Pushkin's man deposed
That yesternorn came to his house from Cracow
A courier, who within an hour was sent
Without a letter back.

TSAR. Arrest the courier.

SEMYON G. Some are already sent to overtake him.

TSAR. And what of Shuisky?

SEMYON G. Last night he entertained
His friends; the Buturlins, both Miloslavskys,
And Saltikov, with Pushkin and some others.
They parted late. Pushkin alone remained
Closeted with his host and talked with him
A long time more.

TSAR. For Shuisky send forthwith.

SEMYON G. Sire, he is here already.

TSAR. Call him hither.

(Exit SEMYON Godunov.)

Dealings with Lithuania? What means this?
I like not the seditious race of Pushkins,
Nor must I trust in Shuisky, obsequious,
But bold and wily —

(Enter SHUIISKY.)

Prince, I must speak with thee.
But thou thyself, it seems, hast business with me,
And I would listen first to thee.

SHUIISKY. Yea, sire;
It is my duty to convey to thee
Grave news.

TSAR. I listen.

SHUIISKY. (Sotto voce, pointing to FEODOR.)
But, sire —

TSAR. The tsarevich
May learn whate'er Prince Shuisky knoweth. Speak.

SHUIISKY. My liege, from Lithuania there have come
Tidings to us —

TSAR. Are they not those same tidings
Which yestereve a courier bore to Pushkin?

SHUIISKY. Nothing is hidden from him! — Sire, I thought
Thou knew'st not yet this secret.

TSAR. Let not that
Trouble thee, prince; I fain would scrutinise
Thy information; else we shall not learn
The actual truth.

SHUIISKY. I know this only, Sire;
In Cracow a pretender hath appeared;
The king and nobles back him.

TSAR. What say they?
And who is this pretender?

SHUIISKY. I know not.

TSAR. But wherein is he dangerous?

SHUISKY. Verily
Thy state, my liege, is firm; by graciousness,
Zeal, bounty, thou hast won the filial love
Of all thy slaves; but thou thyself dost know
The mob is thoughtless, changeable, rebellious,
Credulous, lightly given to vain hope,
Obedient to each momentary impulse,
To truth deaf and indifferent; it feedeth
On fables; shameless boldness pleaseth it.
So, if this unknown vagabond should cross
The Lithuanian border, Dimitry's name
Raised from the grave will gain him a whole crowd
Of fools.

TSAR. Dimitry's? — What? — That child's? — Dimitry's?
Withdraw, tsarevich.

SHUISKY. He flushed; there'll be a storm!

FEODOR. Suffer me, Sire —

TSAR. Impossible, my son;
Go, go!

(Exit FEODOR.)

Dimitry's name!

SHUISKY. Then he knew nothing.

TSAR. Listen: take steps this very hour that Russia
Be fenced by barriers from Lithuania;
That not a single soul pass o'er the border,
That not a hare run o'er to us from Poland,
Nor crow fly here from Cracow. Away!

SHUISKY. I go.

TSAR. Stay! — Is it not a fact that this report
Is artfully concocted? Hast ever heard
That dead men have arisen from their graves
To question tsars, legitimate tsars, appointed,
Chosen by the voice of all the people, crowned
By the great Patriarch? Is't not laughable?
Eh? What? Why laugh'st thou not thereat?

SHUISKY.

I, Sire?

TSAR. Hark, Prince Vassily; when first I learned this child
Had been — this child had somehow lost its life,
‘Twas thou I sent to search the matter out.
Now by the Cross and God I do adjure thee,
Declare to me the truth upon thy conscience;
Didst recognise the slaughtered boy; was’t not
A substitute? Reply.

SHUISKY. I swear to thee —

TSAR. Nay, Shuisky, swear not, but reply; was it
Indeed Dimitry?

SHUISKY. He.

TSAR. Consider, prince.
I promise clemency; I will not punish
With vain disgrace a lie that’s past. But if
Thou now beguile me, then by my son’s head
I swear — an evil fate shall overtake thee,
Requital such that Tsar Ivan Vasilievich
Shall shudder in his grave with horror of it.

SHUISKY. In punishment no terror lies; the terror
Doth lie in thy disfavour; in thy presence
Dare I use cunning? Could I deceive myself
So blindly as not recognise Dimitry?
Three days in the cathedral did I visit
His corpse, escorted thither by all Uglich.
Around him thirteen bodies lay of those
Slain by the people, and on them corruption
Already had set in perceptibly.
But lo! The childish face of the tsarevich
Was bright and fresh and quiet as if asleep;
The deep gash had congealed not, nor the lines
Of his face even altered. No, my liege,
There is no doubt; Dimitry sleeps in the grave.

TSAR. Enough, withdraw.

(Exit SHUISKY.)

 I choke! — let me get my breath!
I felt it; all my blood surged to my face,

And heavily fell back. — So that is why
For thirteen years together I have dreamed
Ever about the murdered child. Yes, yes —
'Tis that! — now I perceive. But who is he,
My terrible antagonist? Who is it
Opposeth me? An empty name, a shadow.
Can it be a shade shall tear from me the purple,
A sound deprive my children of succession?
Fool that I was! Of what was I afraid?
Blow on this phantom — and it is no more.
So, I am fast resolved; I'll show no sign
Of fear, but nothing must be held in scorn.
Ah! Heavy art thou, crown of Monomakh!

CRACOW. HOUSE OF VISHNEVETSKY

The PRETENDER and a CATHOLIC PRIEST

PRETENDER. Nay, father, there will be no trouble. I know
The spirit of my people; piety
Does not run wild in them, their tsar's example
To them is sacred. Furthermore, the people
Are always tolerant. I warrant you,
Before two years my people all, and all
The Eastern Church, will recognise the power
Of Peter's Vicar.

PRIEST. May Saint Ignatius aid thee
When other times shall come. Meanwhile, tsarevich,
Hide in thy soul the seed of heavenly blessing;
Religious duty bids us oft dissemble
Before the blabbing world; the people judge
Thy words, thy deeds; God only sees thy motives.

PRETENDER. Amen. Who's there?

(Enter a Servant.)

Say that we will receive them.

(The doors are opened; a crowd of Russians and Poles enters.)

Comrades! Tomorrow we depart from Cracow.
Mnishek, with thee for three days in Sambor
I'll stay. I know thy hospitable castle
Both shines in splendid stateliness, and glories
In its young mistress; There I hope to see
Charming Marina. And ye, my friends, ye, Russia
And Lithuania, ye who have upraised
Fraternal banners against a common foe,
Against mine enemy, yon crafty villain.
Ye sons of Slavs, speedily will I lead
Your dread battalions to the longed-for conflict.
But soft! Methinks among you I descry
New faces.

GABRIEL P. They have come to beg for sword
And service with your Grace.

PRETENDER. Welcome, my lads.
You are friends to me. But tell me, Pushkin, who
Is this fine fellow?

PUSHKIN. Prince Kurbsky.

PRETENDER. (To KURBSKY.) A famous name!
Art kinsman to the hero of Kazan?

KURBSKY. His son.

PRETENDER. Liveth he still?

KURBSKY. Nay, he is dead.

PRETENDER. A noble soul! A man of war and counsel.
But from the time when he appeared beneath
The ancient town Olgin with the Lithuanians,
Hardy avenger of his injuries,
Rumour hath held her tongue concerning him.

KURBSKY. My father led the remnant of his life
On lands bestowed upon him by Batory;
There, in Volhynia, solitary and quiet,
Sought consolation for himself in studies;
But peaceful labour did not comfort him;
He ne'er forgot the home of his young days,
And to the end pined for it.

PRETENDER. Hapless chieftain!
How brightly shone the dawn of his resounding
And stormy life! Glad am I, noble knight,
That now his blood is reconciled in thee
To his fatherland. The faults of fathers must not
Be called to mind. Peace to their grave. Approach;
Give me thy hand! Is it not strange? — the son
Of Kurbsky to the throne is leading — whom?
Whom but Ivan's own son? — All favours me;
People and fate alike. — Say, who art thou?

A POLE. Sobansky, a free noble.

PRETENDER. Praise and honour
Attend thee, child of liberty. Give him
A third of his full pay beforehand. — Who
Are these? On them I recognise the dress

Of my own country. These are ours.

KRUSHCHOV. (Bows low.) Yea, Sire,
Our father; we are thralls of thine, devoted
And persecuted; we have fled from Moscow,
Disgraced, to thee our tsar, and for thy sake
Are ready to lay down our lives; our corpses
Shall be for thee steps to the royal throne.

PRETENDER. Take heart, innocent sufferers. Only let me
Reach Moscow, and, once there, Boris shall settle
Some scores with me and you. What news of Moscow?

KRUSHCHOV. As yet all there is quiet. But already
The folk have got to know that the tsarevich
Was saved; already everywhere is read
Thy proclamation. All are waiting for thee.
Not long ago Boris sent two boyars
To execution merely because in secret
They drank thy health.

PRETENDER. O hapless, good boyars!
But blood for blood! And woe to Godunov!
What do they say of him?

KRUSHCHOV. He has withdrawn
Into his gloomy palace. He is grim
And sombre. Executions loom ahead.
But sickness gnaws him. Hardly hath he strength
To drag himself along, and — it is thought —
His last hour is already not far off.

PRETENDER. A speedy death I wish him, as becomes
A great-souled foe to wish. If not, then woe
To the miscreant! — And whom doth he intend
To name as his successor?

KRUSHCHOV. He shows not
His purposes, but it would seem he destines
Feodor, his young son, to be our tsar.

PRETENDER. His reckonings, maybe, will yet prove wrong.
Who art thou?

KARELA. A Cossack; from the Don I am sent
To thee, from the free troops, from the brave hetmen
From upper and lower regions of the Cossacks,

To look upon thy bright and royal eyes,
And tender thee their homage.

PRETENDER. Well I knew
The men of Don; I doubted not to see
The Cossack hetmen in my ranks. We thank
Our army of the Don. Today, we know,
The Cossacks are unjustly persecuted,
Oppressed; but if God grant us to ascend
The throne of our forefathers, then as of yore
We'll gratify the free and faithful Don.

POET. (Approaches, bowing low, and taking Gregory by the
hem of his caftan.)
Great prince, illustrious offspring of a king!

PRETENDER. What wouldst thou?

POET. Condescendingly accept
This poor fruit of my earnest toil.

PRETENDER. What see I?
Verses in Latin! Blest a hundredfold
The tie of sword and lyre; the selfsame laurel
Binds them in friendship. I was born beneath
A northern sky, but yet the Latin muse
To me is a familiar voice; I love
The blossoms of Parnassus, I believe
The prophecies of singers. Not in vain
The ecstasy boils in their flaming breast;
Action is hallowed, being glorified
Beforehand by the poets! Approach, my friend.
In memory of me accept this gift.

(Gives him a ring.)

When fate fulfils for me her covenant,
When I assume the crown of my forefathers,
I hope again to hear the measured tones
Of thy sweet voice, and thy inspired lay.
Musa gloriam Coronat, gloriaque musam.
And so, friends, till tomorrow, au revoir.

ALL. Forward! Long live Dimitry! Forward, forward!
Long live Dimitry, the great prince of Moscow!

CASTLE OF THE GOVERNOR

MNISHEK IN SAMBOR

Dressing-Room of Marina

MARINA, ROUZYA (dressing her), Serving-Women

MARINA.

(Before a mirror.) Now then, is it ready? Cannot
you make haste?

ROUZYA. I pray you first to make the difficult choice;
Will you the necklace wear of pearls, or else
The emerald half-moon?

MARINA. My diamond crown.

ROUZYA. Splendid! Do you remember that you wore it
When to the palace you were pleased to go?
They say that at the ball your gracious highness
Shone like the sun; men sighed, fair ladies whispered —
'Twas then that for the first time young Khotkevich
Beheld you, he who after shot himself.
And whosoever looked on you, they say
That instant fell in love.

MARINA. Can't you be quicker?

ROUZYA. At once. Today your father counts upon you.
'Twas not for naught the young tsarevich saw you;
He could not hide his rapture; wounded he is
Already; so it only needs to deal him
A resolute blow, and instantly, my lady,
He'll be in love with you. 'Tis now a month
Since, quitting Cracow, heedless of the war
And throne of Moscow, he has feasted here,
Your guest, enraging Poles alike and Russians.
Heavens! Shall I ever live to see the day? —
Say, you will not, when to his capital
Dimitry leads the queen of Moscow, say
You'll not forsake me?

MARINA. Dost thou truly think
I shall be queen?

ROUZYA. Who, if not you? Who here
Dares to compare in beauty with my mistress?
The race of Mnishek never yet has yielded
To any. In intellect you are beyond
All praise. — Happy the suitor whom your glance
Honours with its regard, who wins your heart —
Whoe'er he be, be he our king, the dauphin
Of France, or even this our poor tsarevich
God knows who, God knows whence!

MARINA. The very son
Of the tsar, and so confessed by the whole world.

ROUZYA. And yet last winter he was but a servant
In the house of Vishnevetsky.

MARINA. He was hiding.

ROUZYA. I do not question it: but still do you know
What people say about him? That perhaps
He is a deacon run away from Moscow,
In his own district a notorious rogue.

MARINA. What nonsense!

ROUZYA. O, I do not credit it!
I only say he ought to bless his fate
That you have so preferred him to the others.

WAITING-WOMAN. (Runs in.) The guests have come already.

MARINA. There you see;
You're ready to chatter silliness till daybreak.
Meanwhile I am not dressed —

ROUZYA. Within a moment
'Twill be quite ready.

(The Waiting-women bustle.)

MARINA. (Aside.) I must find out all.

A SUITE OF LIGHTED ROOMS.

VISHNEVETSKY, MNISHEK

MNISHEK. With none but my Marina doth he speak,
With no one else consorteth — and that business
Looks dreadfully like marriage. Now confess,
Didst ever think my daughter would be a queen?

VISHNEVETSKY. 'Tis wonderful. — And, Mnishek, didst thou think My servant would ascend the throne of Moscow?

MNISHEK. And what a girl, look you, is my Marina.
I merely hinted to her: "Now, be careful!
Let not Dimitry slip" — and lo! Already
He is completely tangled in her toils.

(The band plays a Polonaise. The PRETENDER and MARINA advance as the first couple.)

MARINA. (Sotto voce to Dimitry.) Tomorrow evening at eleven, beside
The fountain in the avenue of lime-trees.

(They walk off. A second couple.)

CAVALIER. What can Dimitry see in her?

DAME. How say you?
She is a beauty.

CAVALIER. Yes, a marble nymph;
Eyes, lips, devoid of life, without a smile.

(A fresh couple.)

DAME. He is not handsome, but his eyes are pleasing,
And one can see he is of royal birth.

(A fresh couple.)

DAME. When will the army march?

CAVALIER. When the tsarevich
Orders it; we are ready; but 'tis clear
The lady Mnishek and Dimitry mean
To keep us prisoners here.

DAME. A pleasant durance.

CAVALIER. Truly, if you...

(They walk off; the rooms become empty.)

MNISHEK. We old ones dance no longer;
The sound of music lures us not; we press not
Nor kiss the hands of charmers — ah! My friend,
I've not forgotten the old pranks! Things now
Are not what once they were, what once they were!
Youth, I'll be sworn, is not so bold, nor beauty
So lively; everything — confess, my friend —
Has somehow become dull. So let us leave them;
My comrade, let us go and find a flask
Of old Hungarian overgrown with mould;
Let's bid my butler open an old bottle,
And in a quiet corner, tete-a-tete,
Let's drain a draught, a stream as thick as fat;
And while we're so engaged, let's think things over.
Let us go, brother.

VISHNEVETSKY. Yes, my friend, let's go.

NIGHT

THE GARDEN. THE FOUNTAIN

PRETENDER. (Enters.) Here is the fountain; hither will she come.
I was not born a coward; I have seen
Death near at hand, and face to face with death
My spirit hath not blenched. A life-long dungeon
Hath threatened me, I have been close pursued,
And yet my spirit quailed not, and by boldness
I have escaped captivity. But what
Is this which now constricts my breath? What means
This overpowering tremor, or this quivering
Of tense desire? No, this is fear. All day
I have waited for this secret meeting, pondered
On all that I should say to her, how best
I might enmesh Marina's haughty mind,
Calling her queen of Moscow. But the hour
Has come — and I remember naught, I cannot
Recall the speeches I have learned by rote;
Love puts imagination to confusion —
But something there gleamed suddenly — a rustling;
Hush — no, it was the moon's deceitful light,
It was the rustling of the breeze.

MARINA. (Enters.) Tsarevich!

PRETENDER. 'Tis she. Now all the blood in me stands still.

MARINA. Dimitry! Is it thou?

PRETENDER. Bewitching voice!

(Goes to her.)

Is it thou, at last? Is it thou I see, alone
With me, beneath the roof of quiet night?
How slowly passed the tedious day! How slowly
The glow of evening died away! How long
I have waited in the gloom of night!

MARINA. The hours
Are flitting fast, and time is precious to me.
I did not grant a meeting here to thee
To listen to a lover's tender speeches.
No need of words. I well believe thou lovest;

But listen; with thy stormy, doubtful fate
I have resolved to join my own; but one thing,
Dimitry, I require; I claim that thou
Disclose to me thy secret hopes, thy plans,
Even thy fears, that hand in hand with thee
I may confront life boldly — not in blindness
Of childlike ignorance, not as the slave
And plaything of my husband's light desires,
Thy speechless concubine, but as thy spouse,
And worthy helpmate of the tsar of Moscow.

PRETENDER. O, if it be only for one short hour,
Forget the cares and troubles of my fate!
Forget 'tis the tsarevich whom thou seest
Before thee. O, behold in me, Marina,
A lover, by thee chosen, happy only
In thy regard. O, listen to the prayers
Of love! Grant me to utter all wherewith
My heart is full.

MARINA. Prince, this is not the time;
Thou loiterest, and meanwhile the devotion
Of thine adherents cooleth. Hour by hour
Danger becomes more dangerous, difficulties
More difficult; already dubious rumours
Are current, novelty already takes
The place of novelty; and Godunov
Adopts his measures.

PRETENDER. What is Godunov?
Is thy sweet love, my only blessedness,
Swayed by Boris? Nay, nay. Indifferently
I now regard his throne, his kingly power.
Thy love — without it what to me is life,
And glory's glitter, and the state of Russia?
On the dull steppe, in a poor mud hut, thou —
Thou wilt requite me for the kingly crown;
Thy love —

MARINA. For shame! Forget not, prince, thy high
And sacred destiny; thy dignity
Should be to thee more dear than all the joys
Of life and its allurements. It thou canst not
With anything compare. Not to a boy,
Insanely boiling, captured by my beauty —
But to the heir of Moscow's throne give I
My hand in solemn wise, to the tsarevich

Rescued by destiny.

PRETENDER. Torture me not,
Charming Marina; say not that 'twas my rank
And not myself that thou didst choose. Marina!
Thou knowest not how sorely thou dost wound
My heart thereby. What if — O fearful doubt! —
Say, if blind destiny had not assigned me
A kingly birth; if I were not indeed
Son of Ivan, were not this boy, so long
Forgotten by the world — say, then wouldst thou
Have loved me?

MARINA. Thou art Dimitry, and aught else
Thou canst not be; it is not possible
For me to love another.

PRETENDER. Nay! Enough —
I have no wish to share with a dead body
A mistress who belongs to him; I have done
With counterfeiting, and will tell the truth.
Know, then, that thy Dimitry long ago
Perished, was buried — and will not rise again;
And dost thou wish to know what man I am?
Well, I will tell thee. I am — a poor monk.
Grown weary of monastic servitude,
I pondered 'neath the cowl my bold design,
Made ready for the world a miracle —
And from my cell at last fled to the Cossacks,
To their wild hovels; there I learned to handle
Both steeds and swords; I showed myself to you.
I called myself Dimitry, and deceived
The brainless Poles. What say'st thou, proud Marina?
Art thou content with my confession? Why
Dost thou keep silence?

MARINA. O shame! O woe is me!

(Silence.)

PRETENDER. (Sotto voce.) O whither hath a fit of anger led me?
The happiness devised with so much labour
I have, perchance, destroyed for ever. Idiot,
What have I done? (Aloud.) I see thou art ashamed
Of love not princely; so pronounce on me
The fatal word; my fate is in thy hands.
Decide; I wait.

(Falls on his knees.)

MARINA. Rise, poor pretender! Think'st thou
To please with genuflex on my vain heart,
As if I were a weak, confiding girl?
You err, my friend; prone at my feet I've seen
Knights and counts nobly born; but not for this
Did I reject their prayers, that a poor monk —

PRETENDER. (Rises.) Scorn not the young pretender; noble virtues
May lie perchance in him, virtues well worthy
Of Moscow's throne, even of thy priceless hand —

MARINA. Say of a shameful noose, insolent wretch!

PRETENDER. I am to blame; carried away by pride
I have deceived God and the kings — have lied
To the world; but it is not for thee, Marina,
To judge me; I am guiltless before thee.
No, I could not deceive thee. Thou to me
Wast the one sacred being, before thee
I dared not to dissemble; love alone,
Love, jealous, blind, constrained me to tell all.

MARINA. What's that to boast of, idiot? Who demanded
Confession of thee? If thou, a nameless vagrant
Couldst wonderfully blind two nations, then
At least thou shouldst have merited success,
And thy bold fraud secured, by constant, deep,
And lasting secrecy. Say, can I yield
Myself to thee, can I, forgetting rank
And maiden modesty, unite my fate
With thine, when thou thyself impetuously
Dost thus with such simplicity reveal
Thy shame? It was from Love he blabbed to me!
I marvel wherefore thou hast not from friendship
Disclosed thyself ere now before my father,
Or else before our king from joy, or else
Before Prince Vishnevetsky from the zeal
Of a devoted servant.

PRETENDER. I swear to thee
That thou alone wast able to extort
My heart's confession; I swear to thee that never,
Nowhere, not in the feast, not in the cup
Of folly, not in friendly confidence,

Not 'neath the knife nor tortures of the rack,
Shall my tongue give away these weighty secrets.

MARINA. Thou swearest! Then I must believe. Believe,
Of course! But may I learn by what thou swearest?
Is it not by the name of God, as suits
The Jesuits' devout adopted son?
Or by thy honour as a high-born knight?
Or, maybe, by thy royal word alone
As a king's son? Is it not so? Declare.

PRETENDER. (Proudly.) The phantom of the Terrible hath made me
His son; from out the sepulchre hath named me
Dimitry, hath stirred up the people round me,
And hath consigned Boris to be my victim.
I am tsarevich. Enough! 'Twere shame for me
To stoop before a haughty Polish dame.
Farewell for ever; the game of bloody war,
The wide cares of my destiny, will smother,
I hope, the pangs Of love. O, when the heat
Of shameful passion is o'erspent, how then
Shall I detest thee! Now I leave thee — ruin,
Or else a crown, awaits my head in Russia;
Whether I meet with death as fits a soldier
In honourable fight, or as a miscreant
Upon the public scaffold, thou shalt not
Be my companion, nor shalt share with me
My fate; but it may be thou shalt regret
The destiny thou hast refused.

MARINA. But what
If I expose beforehand thy bold fraud
To all men?

PRETENDER. Dost thou think I fear thee? Think'st thou
They will believe a Polish maiden more
Than Russia's own tsarevich? Know, proud lady,
That neither king, nor pope, nor nobles trouble
Whether my words be true, whether I be
Dimitry or another. What care they?
But I provide a pretext for revolt
And war; and this is all they need; and thee,
Rebellious one, believe me, they will force
To hold thy peace. Farewell.

MARINA. Tsarevich, stay!
At last I hear the speech not of a boy,

But of a man. It reconciles me to thee.
Prince, I forget thy senseless outburst, see
Again Dimitry. Listen; now is the time!
Hasten; delay no more, lead on thy troops
Quickly to Moscow, purge the Kremlin, take
Thy seat upon the throne of Moscow; then
Send me the nuptial envoy; but, God hears me,
Until thy foot be planted on its steps,
Until by thee Boris be overthrown,
I am not one to listen to love-speeches.

PRETENDER. No — easier far to strive with Godunov.
Or play false with the Jesuits of the Court,
Than with a woman. Deuce take them; they're beyond
My power. She twists, and coils, and crawls, slips out
Of hand, she hisses, threatens, bites. Ah, serpent!
Serpent! 'Twas not for nothing that I trembled.
She well-nigh ruined me; but I'm resolved;
At daybreak I will put my troops in motion.

THE LITHUANIAN FRONTIER

OCTOBER 16TH, 1604

PRINCE KURBSKY and PRETENDER, both on horseback. Troops approach the Frontier

KURBSKY. (Gallop at their head.)

There, there it is; there is the Russian frontier!

Fatherland! Holy Russia! I am thine!

With scorn from off my clothing now I shake

The foreign dust, and greedily I drink

New air; it is my native air. O father,

Thy soul hath now been solaced; in the grave

Thy bones, disgraced, thrill with a sudden joy!

Again doth flash our old ancestral sword,

This glorious sword — the dread of dark Kazan!

This good sword — servant of the tsars of Moscow!

Now will it revel in its feast of slaughter,

Serving the master of its hopes.

PRETENDER. (Moves quietly with bowed head.) How happy

Is he, how flushed with gladness and with glory

His stainless soul! Brave knight, I envy thee!

The son of Kurbsky, nurtured in exile,

Forgetting all the wrongs borne by thy father,

Redeeming his transgression in the grave,

Ready art thou for the son of great Ivan

To shed thy blood, to give the fatherland

Its lawful tsar. Righteous art thou; thy soul

Should flame with joy.

KURBSKY. And dost not thou likewise

Rejoice in spirit? There lies our Russia; she

Is thine, tsarevich! There thy people's hearts

Are waiting for thee, there thy Moscow waits,

Thy Kremlin, thy dominion.

PRETENDER. Russian blood,

O Kurbsky, first must flow! Thou for the tsar

Hast drawn the sword, thou art stainless; but I lead you

Against your brothers; I am summoning

Lithuania against Russia; I am showing

To foes the longed-for way to beautiful Moscow!

But let my sin fall not on me, but thee,

Boris, the regicide! Forward! Set on!

KURBSKY. Forward! Advance! And woe to Godunov.

(They gallop. The troops cross the frontier.)

THE COUNCIL OF THE TSAR

The TSAR, the PATRIARCH and Boyars

TSAR. Is it possible? An unfrocked monk against us
Leads rascal troops, a truant friar dares write
Threats to us! Then 'tis time to tame the madman!
Trubetskoy, set thou forth, and thou Basmanov;
My zealous governors need help. Chernigov
Already by the rebel is besieged;
Rescue the city and citizens.

BASMANOV. Three months
Shall not pass, Sire, ere even rumour's tongue
Shall cease to speak of the pretender; caged
In iron, like a wild beast from oversea,
We'll hale him into Moscow, I swear by God.

(Exit with TRUBETSKOY.)

TSAR. The Lord of Sweden hath by envoys tendered
Alliance to me. But we have no need
To lean on foreign aid; we have enough
Of our own warlike people to repel
Traitors and Poles. I have refused. — Shchelkalov!
In every district to the governors
Send edicts, that they mount their steeds, and send
The people as of old on service; likewise
Ride to the monasteries, and there enlist
The servants of the churchmen. In days of old,
When danger faced our country, hermits freely
Went into battle; it is not now our wish
To trouble them; no, let them pray for us;
Such is the tsar's decree, such the resolve
Of his boyars. And now a weighty question
We shall determine; ye know how everywhere
The insolent pretender hath spread abroad
His artful rumours; letters everywhere,
By him distributed, have sowed alarm
And doubt; seditious whispers to and fro
Pass in the market-places; minds are seething.
We needs must cool them; gladly would I refrain
From executions, but by what means and how?
That we will now determine. Holy father,
Thou first declare thy thought.

PATRIARCH. The Blessed One,
The All-Highest, hath instilled into thy soul,
Great lord, the spirit of kindness and meek patience;
Thou wishest not perdition for the sinner,
Thou wilt wait quietly, until delusion
Shall pass away; for pass away it will,
And truth's eternal sun will dawn on all.
Thy faithful bedesman, one in worldly matters
No prudent judge, ventures today to offer
His voice to thee. This offspring of the devil,
This unfrocked monk, has known how to appear
Dimitry to the people. Shamelessly
He clothed himself with the name of the tsarevich
As with a stolen vestment. It only needs
To tear it off — and he'll be put to shame
By his own nakedness. The means thereto
God hath Himself supplied. Know, sire, six years
Since then have fled; 'twas in that very year
When to the seat of sovereignty the Lord
Anointed thee — there came to me one evening
A simple shepherd, a venerable old man,
Who told me a strange secret. "In my young days,"
He said, "I lost my sight, and thenceforth knew not
Nor day, nor night, till my old age; in vain
I plied myself with herbs and secret spells;
In vain did I resort in adoration
To the great wonder-workers in the cloister;
Bathed my dark eyes in vain with healing water
From out the holy wells. The Lord vouchsafed not
Healing to me. Then lost I hope at last,
And grew accustomed to my darkness. Even
Slumber showed not to me things visible,
Only of sounds I dreamed. Once in deep sleep
I hear a childish voice; it speaks to me:
'Arise, grandfather, go to Uglich town,
To the Cathedral of Transfiguration;
There pray over my grave. The Lord is gracious —
And I shall pardon thee.' 'But who art thou?'
I asked the childish voice. 'I am the tsarevich
Dimitry, whom the Heavenly Tsar hath taken
Into His angel band, and I am now
A mighty wonder-worker. Go, old man.'
I woke, and pondered. What is this? Maybe
God will in very deed vouchsafe to me
Belated healing. I will go. I bent

My footsteps to the distant road. I reached
Uglich, repair unto the holy minster,
Hear mass, and, glowing with zealous soul, I weep
Sweetly, as if the blindness from mine eyes
Were flowing out in tears. And when the people
Began to leave, to my grandson I said:
'Lead me, Ivan, to the grave of the tsarevich
Dimitry.' The boy led me — and I scarce
Had shaped before the grave a silent prayer,
When sight illumed my eyeballs; I beheld
The light of God, my grandson, and the tomb."
That is the tale, Sire, which the old man told.

(General agitation. In the course of this speech Boris
several times wipes his face with his handkerchief.)

To Uglich then I sent, where it was learned
That many sufferers had found likewise
Deliverance at the grave of the tsarevich.
This is my counsel; to the Kremlin send
The sacred relics, place them in the Cathedral
Of the Archangel; clearly will the people
See then the godless villain's fraud; the might
Of the fiends will vanish as a cloud of dust.

(Silence.)

PRINCE SHUISKY. What mortal, holy father, knoweth the ways
Of the All-Highest? 'Tis not for me to judge Him.
Untainted sleep and power of wonder-working
He may upon the child's remains bestow;
But vulgar rumour must dispassionately
And diligently be tested; is it for us,
In stormy times of insurrection,
To weigh so great a matter? Will men not say
That insolently we made of sacred things
A worldly instrument? Even now the people
Sway senselessly this way and that, even now
There are enough already of loud rumours;
This is no time to vex the people's minds
With aught so unexpected, grave, and strange.
I myself see 'tis needful to demolish
The rumour spread abroad by the unfrocked monk;
But for this end other and simpler means
Will serve. Therefore, when it shall please thee, Sire,
I will myself appear in public places,
I will persuade, exhort away this madness,

And will expose the vagabond's vile fraud.

TSAR. So be it! My lord Patriarch, I pray thee
Go with us to the palace, where today
I must converse with thee.

(Exeunt; all the boyars follow them.)

1ST BOYAR. (Sotto voce to another.) Didst mark how pale
Our sovereign turned, how from his face there poured
A mighty sweat?

2ND BOYAR. I durst not, I confess,
Uplift mine eyes, nor breathe, nor even stir.

1ST BOYAR. Prince Shuisky has pulled it through. A
splendid fellow!

A PLAIN NEAR NOVGOROD SEVERSK

DECEMBER 21st, 1604

A BATTLE

SOLDIERS. (Run in disorder.) Woe, woe! The Tsarevich!
The Poles! There they are! There they are!

(Captains enter: MARZHERET and WALTHER ROZEN.)

MARZHERET. Whither, whither? Allons! Go back!

ONE OF THE FUGITIVES. You go back, if you like, cursed
infidel.

MARZHERET. Quoi, quoi?

ANOTHER. Kva! kva! You like, you frog from over the
sea, to croak at the Russian tsarevich; but we — we are
orthodox.

MARZHERET. Qu'est-ce a dire "orthodox"? Sacres gueux,
maudite canaille! Mordieu, mein Herr, j'enrage; on
dirait que ca n'a pas de bras pour frapper, ca n'a que des
jambes pour fuir.

ROZEN. Es ist Schande.

MARZHERET. Ventre-saint gris! Je ne bouge plus d'un pas;
puisque le vin est tire, il faut le boire. Qu'en dites-vous,
mein Herr?

ROZEN. Sie haben Recht.

MARZHERET. Tudieu, il y fait chaud! Ce diable de "Pretender,"
comme ils l'appellent, est un bougre, qui a du
poil au col? — Qu'en pensez-vous, mein Herr?

ROZEN. Ja.

MARZHERET. He! Voyez donc, voyez donc! L'action s'engage
sur les derrieres de l'ennemi. Ce doit etre le brave
Basmanov, qui aurait fait une sortie.

ROZEN. Ich glaube das.

(Enter Germans.)

MARZHERET. Ha, ha! Voici nos allemands. Messieurs!
Mein Herr, dites-leur donc de se raillier et, sacrebleu,
chargeons!

ROZEN. Sehr gut. Halt! (The Germans halt.) Marsch!

THE GERMANS. (They march.) Hilf Gott!

(Fight. The Russians flee again.)

POLES. Victory! Victory! Glory to the tsar Dimitry!

DIMITRY. (On horseback.) Cease fighting. We have
conquered. Enough! Spare Russian blood. Cease
fighting.

OPEN SPACE IN FRONT OF THE CATHEDRAL IN MOSCOW

THE PEOPLE

ONE OF THE PEOPLE. Will the tsar soon come out of the Cathedral?

ANOTHER. The mass is ended; now the Te Deum is going on.

THE FIRST. What! Have they already cursed him?

THE SECOND. I stood in the porch and heard how the deacon cried out: — Grishka Otrepiev is anathema!

THE FIRST. Let him curse to his heart's content; the tsarevich has nothing to do with the Otrepiev.

THE SECOND. But they are now singing mass for the repose of the soul of the tsarevich.

THE FIRST. What? A mass for the dead sung for a living Man? They'll suffer for it, the godless wretches!

A THIRD. Hist! A sound. Is it not the tsar?

A FOURTH. No, it is the idiot.

(An idiot enters, in an iron cap, hung round with chains, surrounded by boys.)

THE BOYS. Nick, Nick, iron nightcap! T-r-r-r —

OLD WOMAN. Let him be, you young devils. Innocent one, pray thou for me a sinner.

IDIOT. Give, give, give a penny.

OLD WOMAN. There is a penny for thee; remember me in thy prayers.

IDIOT. (Seats himself on the ground and sings:)

The moon sails on,
The kitten cries,
Nick, arise,
Pray to God.

(The boys surround him again.)

ONE OF THEM. How do you do, Nick? Why don't you take off your cap?

(Raps him on the iron cap.)

How it rings!

IDIOT. But I have got a penny.

BOYS. That's not true; now, show it.

(They snatch the penny and run away.)

IDIOT. (Weeps.) They have taken my penny, they are hurting Nick.

THE PEOPLE. The tsar, the tsar is coming!

(The TSAR comes out from the Cathedral; a boyar in front of him scatters alms among the poor. Boyars.)

IDIOT. Boris, Boris! The boys are hurting Nick.

TSAR. Give him alms! What is he crying for?

IDIOT. The boys are hurting me...Give orders to slay them, as thou slewest the little tsarevich.

BOYARS. Go away, fool! Seize the fool!

TSAR. Leave him alone. Pray thou for me, Nick.

(Exit.)

IDIOT. (To himself.) No, no! It is impossible to pray for tsar Herod; the Mother of God forbids it.

SYEVSK

The PRETENDER, surrounded by his supporters

PRETENDER. Where is the prisoner?

A POLE. Here.

PRETENDER. Call him before me.

(A Russian prisoner enters.)

Who art thou?

PRISONER. Rozhnov, a nobleman of Moscow.

PRETENDER. Hast long been in the service?

PRISONER. About a month.

PRETENDER. Art not ashamed, Rozhnov, that thou hast drawn
The sword against me?

PRISONER. What else could I do?
'Twas not our fault.

PRETENDER. Didst fight beneath the walls
Of Seversk?

PRISONER. 'Twas two weeks after the battle
I came from Moscow.

PRETENDER. What of Godunov?

PRISONER. The battle's loss, Mstislavsky's wound, hath caused him
Much apprehension; Shuisky he hath sent
To take command.

PRETENDER. But why hath he recalled
Basmanov unto Moscow?

PRISONER. The tsar rewarded
His services with honour and with gold.
Basmanov in the council of the tsar
Now sits.

PRETENDER. The army had more need of him.
Well, how go things in Moscow?

PRISONER. All is quiet,
Thank God.

PRETENDER. Say, do they look for me?

PRISONER. God knows;
They dare not talk too much there now. Of some
The tongues have been cut off, of others even
The heads. It is a fearsome state of things —
Each day an execution. All the prisons
Are crammed. Wherever two or three forgather
In public places, instantly a spy
Worms himself in; the tsar himself examines
At leisure the denouncers. It is just
Sheer misery; so silence is the best.

PRETENDER. An enviable life for the tsar's people!
Well, how about the army?

PRISONER. What of them?
Clothed and full-fed they are content with all.

PRETENDER. But is there much of it?

PRISONER. God knows.

PRETENDER. All told
Will there be thirty thousand?

PRISONER. Yes; 'twill run
Even to fifty thousand.

(The Pretender reflects; those around him glance at
one another.)

PRETENDER. Well! Of me
What say they in your camp?

PRISONER. Your graciousness
They speak of; say that thou, Sire, (be not wrath),
Art a thief, but a fine fellow.

PRETENDER. (Laughing.) Even so
I'll prove myself to them in deed. My friends,

We will not wait for Shuisky; I wish you joy;
Tomorrow, battle.

(Exit.)

ALL. Long life to Dimitry!

A POLE. Tomorrow, battle! They are fifty thousand,
And we scarce fifteen thousand. He is mad!

ANOTHER. That's nothing, friend. A single Pole can challenge
Five hundred Muscovites.

PRISONER. Yes, thou mayst challenge!
But when it comes to fighting, then, thou braggart,
Thou'lt run away.

POLE. If thou hadst had a sword,
Insolent prisoner, then (pointing to his sword) with this I'd soon
Have vanquished thee.

PRISONER. A Russian can make shift
Without a sword; how like you this (shows his fist), you fool?

(The Pole looks at him haughtily and departs in
silence. All laugh.)

A FOREST

PRETENDER and PUSHKIN

(In the background lies a dying horse)

PRETENDER. Ah, my poor horse! How gallantly he charged
Today in the last battle, and when wounded,
How swiftly bore me. My poor horse!

PUSHKIN. (To himself.) Well, here's
A great ado about a horse, when all
Our army's smashed to bits.

PRETENDER. Listen! Perhaps
He's but exhausted by the loss of blood,
And will recover.

PUSHKIN. Nay, nay; he is dying.

PRETENDER. (Goes to his horse.)
My poor horse! — what to do? Take off the bridle,
And loose the girth. Let him at least die free.

(He unbridles and unsaddles the horse. Some Poles enter.)

Good day to you, gentlemen! How is't I see not
Kurbsky among you? I did note today
How to the thick of the fight he clove his path;
Around the hero's sword, like swaying ears
Of corn, hosts thronged; but higher than all of them
His blade was brandished, and his terrible cry
Drowned all cries else. Where is my knight?

POLE. He fell
On the field of battle.

PRETENDER. Honour to the brave,
And peace be on his soul! How few unscathed
Are left us from the fight! Accursed Cossacks,
Traitors and miscreants, you, you it is
Have ruined us! Not even for three minutes
To keep the foe at bay! I'll teach the villains!
Every tenth man I'll hang. Brigands!

PUSHKIN. Whoe'er
Be guilty, all the same we were clean worsted,
Routed!

PRETENDER. But yet we nearly conquered. Just
When I had dealt with their front rank, the Germans
Repulsed us utterly. But they're fine fellows!
By God! Fine fellows! I love them for it. From them
I'll form an honourable troop.

PUSHKIN. And where
Shall we now spend the night?

PRETENDER. Why, here, in the forest.
Why not this for our night quarters? At daybreak
We'll take the road, and dine in Rilsk. Good night.

(He lies down, puts a saddle under his head, and falls
asleep.)

PUSHKIN. A pleasant sleep, tsarevich! Smashed to bits,
Rescued by flight alone, he is as careless
As a simple child; 'tis clear that Providence
Protects him, and we, my friends, will not lose heart.

MOSCOW. PALACE OF THE TSAR

BORIS. BASMANOV

TSAR. He is vanquished, but what profit lies in that?
We are crowned with a vain conquest; he has mustered
Again his scattered forces, and anew
Threatens us from the ramparts of Putivl.
Meanwhile what are our heroes doing? They stand
At Krom, where from its rotten battlements
A band of Cossacks braves them. There is glory!
No, I am ill content with them; thyself
I shall despatch to take command of them;
I give authority not to birth, but brains.
Their pride of precedence, let it be wounded!
The time has come for me to hold in scorn
The murmur of distinguished nobodies,
And quash pernicious custom.

BASMANOV. Ay, my lord
Blessed a hundredfold will be that day
When fire consumes the lists of noblemen
With their dissensions, their ancestral pride.

TSAR. That day is not far off; let me but first
Subdue the insurrection of the people.

BASMANOV. Why trouble about that? The people always
Are prone to secret treason; even so
The swift steed champs the bit; so doth a lad
Chafe at his father's ruling. But what then?
The rider quietly controls the steed,
The father sways the son.

TSAR. Sometimes the horse
Doth throw the rider, nor is the son at all times
Quite 'neath the father's will; we can restrain
The people only by unsleeping sternness.
So thought Ivan, sagacious autocrat
And storm-subduer; so his fierce grandson thought.
No, no, kindness is lost upon the people;
Act well — it thanks you not at all; extort
And execute — 'twill be no worse for you.

(Enter a boyar.)

What now?

BOYAR. The foreign guests are come.

TSAR. I go
To welcome them. Basmanov, wait, stay here;
I still have need to speak: a word with thee.

(Exit.)

BASMANOV. High sovereign spirit! God grant he may subdue
The accurst Otrepiev; and much, still much
Of good he'll do for Russia. A great thought
Within his mind has taken birth; it must not
Be suffered to grow cold. What a career
For me when the ancestral horn he breaks
Of the nobility. I have no rivals
In war. I shall stand closest to the throne —
And it may chance — But what is that strange sound?

(Alarum. Boyars and court-attendants run in
disorder, meet each other and whisper.)

ONE. Fetch a physician!

ANOTHER. Quickly to the Patriarch!

A THIRD. He calls for the tsarevich, the tsarevich!

A FOURTH. A confessor!

BASMANOV. What has happened?

A FIFTH AND SIXTH. The tsar is ill,
The tsar is dying.

BASMANOV. Good God!

A FIFTH. Upon the throne
He sat, and suddenly he fell; blood gushed
From his mouth and ears.

(The TSAR is carried in on a chair. All the Tsar's
household; all the boyars.)

TSAR. Let all depart — alone
Leave the tsarevich with me. (All withdraw.) I am dying;

Let us embrace. Farewell, my son; this hour
Thou wilt begin to reign. — O God, my God!
This hour I shall appear before Thy presence —
And have no time to purge my soul with shrift.
But yet, my son, I feel thou art dearer to me
Than is my soul's salvation — be it so!
A subject was I born; it seemed ordained
That I should die a subject in obscurity.
Yet I attained to sovereignty; but how?
Ask not. Enough that thou art innocent.
In justice now thou'lt reign; and I alone
Am answerable for all to God. Dear son,
Cherish no false delusion, of thy free will
Blind not thyself. Stormy the days wherein
Thou dost assume the crown. He is dangerous,
This strange pretender; with a fearful name
He is armed. For many a year experienced
In rule, I could restrain revolt and treason;
They quaked with fear before me; treachery
Dared not to raise its voice; but thou, a boy,
An inexperienced ruler, how wilt thou
Govern amid the tempests, quench revolt,
Shackle sedition? But God is great! He gives
Wisdom to youth, to weakness strength. — Give ear;
Firstly, select a steadfast counsellor,
Of cool, ripe years, loved of the people, honoured
Mid the boyars for birth and fame — even Shuisky.
The army craves today a skilful leader;
Basmanov send, and firmly bear the murmurs
Of the boyars. Thou from thy early years
Didst sit with me in council, thou dost know
The formal course of government; change not
Procedure. Custom is the soul of states.
Of late I have been forced to reinstate
Bans, executions — these thou canst rescind;
And they will bless thee, as they blessed thy uncle
When he obtained the throne of the Terrible.
At the same time, little by little, tighten
Anew the reins of government; now slacken;
But let them not slip from thy hands. Be gracious,
Accessible to foreigners, accept
Their service trustfully. Preserve with strictness
The Church's discipline. Be taciturn;
The royal voice must never lose itself
Upon the air in emptiness, but like
A sacred bell must sound but to announce

Some great disaster or great festival.
Dear son, thou art approaching to those years
When woman's beauty agitates our blood.
Preserve, preserve the sacred purity
Of innocence and proud shamefacedness;
He, who through passion has been wont to wallow
In vicious pleasures in his youthful days,
Becomes in manhood bloodthirsty and surly;
His mind untimely darkens. Of thy household
Be always head; show honour to thy mother,
But rule thy house thyself; thou art a man
And tsar to boot. Be loving to thy sister —
Thou wilt be left of her the sole protector.

FEODOR. (On his knees.) No, no; live on, my father, and reign long;
Without thee both the folk and we will perish.

TSAR. All is at end for me — mine eyes grow dark,
I feel the coldness of the grave —

(Enter the PATRIARCH and prelates; behind them all
the boyars lead the TSARITSA by the hand; the
TSAREVNA is sobbing.)

Who's there?

Ah, 'tis the vestment — so! The holy tonsure —
The hour has struck. The tsar becomes a monk,
And the dark sepulchre will be my cell.
Wait yet a little, my lord Patriarch,
I still am tsar. Listen to me, boyars:
To this my son I now commit the tsardom;
Do homage to Feodor. Basmanov, thou,
And ye, my friends, on the grave's brink I pray you
To serve my son with zeal and rectitude!
As yet he is both young and uncorrupted.
Swear ye?

BOYARS. We swear.

TSAR. I am content. Forgive me
Both my temptations and my sins, my wilful
And secret injuries. — Now, holy father,
Approach thou; I am ready for the rite.

(The rite of the tonsure begins. The women are
carried out swooning.)

A TENT

BASMANOV leads in PUSHKIN

BASMANOV. Here enter, and speak freely. So to me
He sent thee.

PUSHKIN. He doth offer thee his friendship
And the next place to his in the realm of Moscow.

BASMANOV. But even thus highly by Feodor am I
Already raised; the army I command;
For me he scorned nobility of rank
And the wrath of the boyars. I have sworn to him
Allegiance.

PUSHKIN. To the throne's lawful successor
Allegiance thou hast sworn; but what if one
More lawful still be living?

BASMANOV. Listen, Pushkin:
Enough of that; tell me no idle tales!
I know the man.

PUSHKIN. Russia and Lithuania
Have long acknowledged him to be Dimitry;
But, for the rest, I do not vouch for it.
Perchance he is indeed the real Dimitry;
Perchance but a pretender; only this
I know, that soon or late the son of Boris
Will yield Moscow to him.

BASMANOV. So long as I
Stand by the youthful tsar, so long he will not
Forsake the throne. We have enough of troops,
Thank God! With victory I will inspire them.
And whom will you against me send, the Cossack
Karel or Mnishek? Are your numbers many?
In all, eight thousand.

PUSHKIN. You mistake; they will not
Amount even to that. I say myself
Our army is mere trash, the Cossacks only
Rob villages, the Poles but brag and drink;
The Russians — what shall I say? — with you I'll not
Dissemble; but, Basmanov, dost thou know

Wherein our strength lies? Not in the army, no.
Nor Polish aid, but in opinion — yes,
In popular opinion. Dost remember
The triumph of Dimitry, dost remember
His peaceful conquests, when, without a blow
The docile towns surrendered, and the mob
Bound the recalcitrant leaders? Thou thyself
Saw'st it; was it of their free-will our troops
Fought with him? And when did they so? Boris
Was then supreme. But would they now? — Nay, nay,
It is too late to blow on the cold embers
Of this dispute; with all thy wits and firmness
Thou'lt not withstand him. Were't not better for thee
To furnish to our chief a wise example,
Proclaim Dimitry tsar, and by that act
Bind him your friend for ever? How thinkest thou?

BASMANOV. Tomorrow thou shalt know.

PUSHKIN. Resolve.

BASMANOV. Farewell.

PUSHKIN. Ponder it well, Basmanov.

(Exit.)

BASMANOV. He is right.
Everywhere treason ripens; what shall I do?
Wait, that the rebels may deliver me
In bonds to the Otrepiev? Had I not better
Forestall the stormy onset of the flood,
Myself to — ah! But to forswear mine oath!
Dishonour to deserve from age to age!
The trust of my young sovereign to requite
With horrible betrayal! 'Tis a light thing
For a disgraced exile to meditate
Sedition and conspiracy; but I?
Is it for me, the favourite of my lord? —
But death — but power — the people's miseries...

(He ponders.)

Here! Who is there? (Whistles.) A horse here!
Sound the muster!

PUBLIC SQUARE IN MOSCOW

PUSHKIN enters, surrounded by the people

THE PEOPLE. The tsarevich a boyar hath sent to us.
Let's hear what the boyar will tell us. Hither!
Hither!

PUSHKIN. (On a platform.) Townsmen of Moscow! The tsarevich
Bids me convey his greetings to you. (He bows.) Ye know
How Divine Providence saved the tsarevich
From out the murderer's hands; he went to punish
His murderer, but God's judgment hath already
Struck down Boris. All Russia hath submitted
Unto Dimitry; with heartfelt repentance
Basmanov hath himself led forth his troops
To swear allegiance to him. In love, in peace
Dimitry comes to you. Would ye, to please
The house of Godunov, uplift a hand
Against the lawful tsar, against the grandson
Of Monomakh?

THE PEOPLE. Not we.

PUSHKIN. Townsmen of Moscow!
The world well knows how much ye have endured
Under the rule of the cruel stranger; ban,
Dishonour, executions, taxes, hardships,
Hunger — all these ye have experienced.
Dimitry is disposed to show you favour,
Courtiers, boyars, state-servants, soldiers, strangers,
Merchants — and every honest man. Will ye
Be stubborn without reason, and in pride
Flee from his kindness? But he himself is coming
To his ancestral throne with dreadful escort.
Provoke not ye the tsar to wrath, fear God,
And swear allegiance to the lawful ruler;
Humble yourselves; forthwith send to Dimitry
The Metropolitan, deacons, boyars,
And chosen men, that they may homage do
To their lord and father.

(Exit. Clamour of the People.)

THE PEOPLE. What is to be said?
The boyar spake truth. Long live Dimitry, our father!

A PEASANT ON THE PLATFORM. People! To the Kremlin!
To the Royal palace!
The whelp of Boris go bind!

THE PEOPLE. (Rushing in a crowd.)
Bind, drown him! Hail
Dimitry! Perish the race of Godunov!

THE KREMLIN. HOUSE OF BORIS

A GUARD on the Staircase. FEODOR at a Window

BEGGAR. Give alms, for Christ's sake.

GUARD. Go away; it is forbidden to speak to the prisoners.

FEODOR. Go, old man, I am poorer than thou; thou art at liberty.

(KSENIA, veiled, also comes to the window.)

ONE OF THE PEOPLE. Brother and sister — poor children, like birds in a cage.

SECOND PERSON. Are you going to pity them? Accursed Family!

FIRST PERSON. The father was a villain, but the children are innocent.

SECOND PERSON. The apple does not fall far from the apple-tree.

KSENIA. Dear brother! Dear brother! I think the boyars are coming to us.

FEODOR. That is Golitsin, Mosalsky. I do not know the others.

KSENIA. Ah! Dear brother, my heart sinks.

(GOLITSIN, MOSALSKY, MOLCHANOV, and SHEREFEDINOV; behind them three archers.)

THE PEOPLE. Make way, make way; the boyars come.
(They enter the house.)

ONE OF THE PEOPLE. What have they come for?

SECOND. Most like to make Feodor Godunov take the oath.

THIRD. Very like. Hark! What a noise in the house!
What an uproar! They are fighting!

THE PEOPLE. Do you hear? A scream! That was a woman's voice. We will go up. We will go up! — The doors are fastened — the cries cease — the noise continues.

(The doors are thrown open. MOSALSKY appears on the staircase.)

MOSALSKY. People! Maria Godunov and her son Feodor have poisoned themselves. We have seen their dead bodies.

(The People are silent with horror.)

Why are ye silent? Cry, Long live the tsar Dimitry Ivanovich!

(The People are speechless.)

THE END

THE STONE GUEST



Translated by T. Keane

This poetic drama is based on the Spanish legend of Don Juan and was written in 1830 as part of Pushkin's collection of four short plays titled *The Little Tragedies*. Unlike most traditional adaptations of the Don Juan tale, which tend to use a farcical and comedic tone, Pushkin's play is more in the style of a romantic tragedy. It is now believed that *The Stone Guest* was never meant for the stage, being a play with little action, except for a duel. The poet is believed to have been inspired after seeing the premiere of a Russian-language version of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Pushkin borrowed certain elements from the libretto, though he made the story his own by adopting the tragic tone.



'Pushkin' by Orest Kiprensky, 1827

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THE STONE GUEST

LEPORELLO.

O statua gentilissima
Del gran Commendatore!...
Ah, Padrone!
Don Giovanni

SCENE I

DON JUAN AND LEPORELLO

DON JUAN. Here we'll await the night. — And so at last
We've reached the portals of Madrid, and soon
Along the well-known streets shall I be flitting,
Mustache and brows concealed by cloak and hat.
What think you? Could I e'er be recognized?

LEPORELLO. Ah, sure 'tis hard to recognize Don Juan!
There are so many like him.

DON JUAN. — Do you jest?
Well, who will recognize me?

LEPORELLO. — Why, the first
Watchman you meet, or gypsy or drunk fiddler,
Or your own kind — some saucy cavalier,
With flowing cloak and sword under his arm.

DON JUAN. What matter, if I'm recognized! Provided
I meet not with the king himself, I fear
No other soul in all Madrid beside.

LEPORELLO. To-morrow it will reach the king's own ear
That Don Juan is in Madrid again,
Without authority returned from exile.
And then what will he do?

DON JUAN. — He'll send me back.
Dear me, they won't cut off my head, you know.
No crime have I committed 'gainst the State!
He sent me off for very love of me,
In order that the murdered man's relations
Might cease to worry me.

LEPORELLO. — Just so, just so!
If only you had stayed there quietly!

DON JUAN. Your humble servant thanks you for the
pleasure!
I all but died of boredom there. What people!
And what a land! The sky?... A pall of smoke;
The women? Why, I never would exchange —
Mark what I say, my foolish Leporello —

The humblest peasant-girl in Andalusia
For all their leading beauties — that I wouldn't.
At first, indeed, these women took my fancy
With their blue eyes and that white skin of theirs,
Their modesty — but most, their novelty;
But, thank the Lord, I soon had sized them up —
Saw that 'twas sin to deal with them at all,
There isn't any life in them — they're all
But waxen dolls... whereas our girls!... But
hist!
We seem to know this place; you recognize it?

LEPORELLO. HOW could I fail to? I remember well
The convent of St. Anthony. You used
To come on visits here, and I would hold
The horses in this grove; a cursèd duty,
I do confess! More pleasantly you spent
Your time here than did I, forsooth.

DON JUAN. (*Pensively.*) — Poor Inez!
She is no more! And how I did adore her!

LEPORELLO. Inez — the black-eyed girl?... Oh, I remember!
For three long months you courted her in vain;
'Twas only through the devil's help you won.

DON JUAN. 'Twas in July... at night. I used to find
Strange pleasure in her melancholy gaze
And in her ashen lips. A curious thing!
But you, it seems, did not consider her
A beauty. And, in fact, there wasn't much
Of real beauty in her. But her eyes,
Her eyes alone, her glance too... such a glance
I never since have met. And then her voice
Was soft and weak, as though she were not well...
Her husband was a rough and heartless black-
guard —
I realized too late... Alas, poor Inez!...

LEPORELLO. What of it? On her heels came others.

DON JUAN. — True!

LEPORELLO. And if we live there will be others still.

DON JUAN. E'en so.

LEPORELLO. — And now what lady in Madrid
Shall we be seeking out?

DON JUAN. — Why, whom but Laura!
I'm off to show myself to her.

LEPORELLO. — Now that's
The way to talk.

DON JUAN. — Just watch me walk straight in;
And if there's someone with her, I'll suggest
His exit through the window.

LEPORELLO. — Why, of course!
Well, now we have recovered our good spirits.
It's not for long dead women can disturb us.
But who is this that comes our way? *{Enter MONK.}*

MONK. — She will
Be here this instant. Who are you? The servants
Of Dona Anna?

LEPORELLO. We are our own masters,
Out for a stroll.

DON JUAN. — But whom are you awaiting?

MONK. Good Dona Anna will be here to visit
Her husband's tomb, and shortly.

DON JUAN. — Dona Anna
De Solva? What? The wife of the commander
Slain by... the name I can't recall...?

MONK. — The vile,
The dissolute, the godless Don Juan.

LEPORELLO. Oho! Well, well! The fame of Don Juan
Has even reached the peaceful convent now;
His eulogies are sung by anchorites.

MONK. Perhaps you know him?

LEPORELLO. — We? No, God forbid.
And where can he be now?

MONK. — He isn't here.
He's far away in exile.

LEPORELLO. — Thank the Lord!
The farther off the better. Would that all
Such rascals in a single sack were sewn
And thrown into the sea.

DON JUAN. — What stuff and nonsense
Is this?

LEPORELLO. Be silent: 'twas on purpose I...

DON JUAN. SO here it was they buried the commander?

MONK. 'Twas here. And here his widow did erect
A monument to him and every day
She comes to weep, and pray that God may grant
His soul salvation.

DON JUAN. — What a curious widow!
And is the lady pretty?

MONK. — Anchorites,
Like us, should not be moved by woman's beauty;
But lying is a sin: a saint himself
Must yet admit her wondrous loveliness.

DON JUAN. The dead man had good reason to be jealous;
He kept this Dona Anna bolted up:
Not one of us e'er caught a glimpse of her.
I'd like to have a talk with her sometime.

MONK. Oh, Dona Anna never talks with men.

DON JUAN. She talks with you, good father, doesn't she?

MONK. Oh, that's a different matter — I'm a monk.
But there she is. — (*Enter DONA ANNA.*)

DONA ANNA. Come, open, holy father.

MONK. I come, Senora; I was waiting for you.
(*DONA ANNA follows the MONK.*)

LEPORELLO. Well, what's she like?

DON JUAN. — There's nothing visible
Of her beneath her somber widow's veil;
I just but glimpsed a trim and narrow heel.

LEPORELLO. That's quite enough for you. Imagination
Will in a jiffy sketch you out the rest;
Your fancy's quicker than the painter's brush.
The starting-point is all the same to you —
The forehead, or the foot.

DON JUAN. — O Leporello,
I'll get to know her.

LEPORELLO. (*to himself.*) There you have the man!
That's the last straw! The fellow, having killed
The husband, now would like to feast his eyes
Upon the widow's tears! The wretch!

DON JUAN. — But see
The dusk is on us. Ere the moon arise
Above us and transform this inky black
Into a glowing twilight, let us creep
Into Madrid.

LEPORELLO. A Spanish nobleman,
Like any thief, awaits the night — and fears
The moon. O Heavens! What a cursèd life!
Ah, how much longer must I bear with him?
My strength, in truth, is nearly at an end!

SCENE II

Room. Supper at LAURA'S.

FIRST GUEST. I swear to you, dear Laura, never yet
Was such perfection in your acting shown!
How thoroughly you understood your rôle!

SECOND GUEST. And with what power its meaning you
unfolded!

THIRD GUEST. And with what art!

LAURA. — To-day, indeed, success
Did crown my every movement, every word:
I yielded freely to my inspiration;
The words flowed forth, as though it was the heart,
And not the timid memory, gave them birth.

FIRST GUEST. 'Tis true; and even now your eyes are shin-
ing,
Your cheeks are burning — no, your ecstasy
Has not yet faded. Laura, let it not
Grow cold before it bear some fruit: pray, Laura,
Do sing us something!

LAURA. — Give me my guitar. (*Sings.*)
ALL. Ah, *brava! bravai* Wonderful! Superb!

FIRST GUEST. Our thanks, enchantress! You have cast a
spell
Upon our hearts. Among the joys of life,
To love alone does music yield the prize;
But love itself is melody.... Behold:
Carlos himself, your surly guest, is touched!

SECOND GUEST. What harmonies! And how much soul
therein!
Who wrote the words, dear Laura?

LAURA. — Don Juan.

DON CARLOS. What? Don Juan?

LAURA. — Some time or other he,
My loyal friend — and fickle lover — wrote them.

DON CARLOS. Your Don Juan's an atheist and a rascal;
While you, you're but a fool.

LAURA. — Have you gone mad?
Grandee of Spain though you may be, I'll bid
My servants cut your throat straightway for this.

DON CARLOS. (*Gets up.*) Well, call them then.

FIRST GUEST. — No, Laura, do not do it;
Don Carlos, don't be angered. She forgot...

LAURA. Forgot? That Don Juan in single combat
Quite honorably killed his brother? True,
'Twere better he had killed Don Carlos.

DON CARLOS. — I
Was stupid to get angry.

LAURA. — You admit
That you were stupid — let us make our peace.

DON CARLOS. Forgive me, Laura; it was all my fault.
But still you know I cannot hear that name
With equanimity.

LAURA. — Am I to blame
If that name's on my tongue at every moment?

GUEST. Come, Laura, as a sign your anger's passed,
Sing once again.

LAURA. — I'll sing a good-night song.
'Tis time — for night has come. What shall I sing?
Ah! listen. (*Sings.*)

ALL. — Charming! Matchless! How sublime!

LAURA. Good night, my friends.

GUESTS. — Good night and thanks,
sweet Laura.
(*They go out. LAURA stops DON CARLOS.*)
422 — dramatic writings

LAURA. You utter madman, you! Remain with me.
You took my fancy; you reminded me
Of Don Juan, the way you rated me

And set your teeth and ground them.

DON CARLOS. — Lucky mam
You loved him then? (LAURA *nods*.) You loved him
deeply?

LAURA. Deeply.

DON CARLOS. And do you love him now?

LAURA. — This very minute?
Why, no. I cannot love two men at once.
It's you I love at present.

DON CARLOS. — Tell me, Laura,
How old are you?

LAURA. — I am eighteen, my friend.

DON CARLOS. O Laura, you are young... and will be
young
For five or six years more. Around you men
Will throng for six years more and shower you
With flattery, with gifts and with caresses,
Divert you with nocturnal serenades,
And kill each other for you at the cross-roads
By night. But when your prime has passed, and
when
Your eyes are sunken, and their puckered lids
Grow dark, and in your tresses gray hairs glint,
And men begin to call you "an old woman,"
Well, what will you say then?

LAURA. — Ah, then... But why
Be thinking now of that? What conversation!
Or are you always thinking things like that?
Come out upon the balcony. How calm
The sky! The air is still and warm; the night
Is odorous with lemon and with laurel;
The bright moon's shining in the dense, dark blue —
The watchmen's drawn-out cry resounds: "All's
well!"...
But far away now in the north — in Paris —
Perhaps the sky is overcast with clouds,
A cold rain's falling and the wind is blowing.
But what is that to us? Now listen, Carlos:
I order you to smile at me. — That's right.

DON CARLOS. You fascinating demon! (*Knocks at door.*)

DON JUAN. — Laura, ho!

LAURA. Who's there? Whose voice is that?

DON JUAN. — Unlock the door...

LAURA. Lord! Can it be?
(*Opens the door, enter DON JUAN.*)

DON JUAN. — Good evening!

LAURA. — Don Juan!...
(*LAURA throws herself on his neck.*)

DON CARLOS. What! Don Juan!...

DON JUAN. — Laura, my darling girl!...
(*Kisses her.*)
Whom have you here, my Laura?

DON CARLOS. — It is I —
Don Carlos.

DON JUAN. What an unexpected meeting!
To-morrow I am at your service...

DON CARLOS. — No!
Not then — at once.

LAURA — Don Carlos, stop, I say!
You're in my house, not in the public street —
I beg you, go away.

DON CARLOS. (*Not listening to her.*) I'm waiting. Well?
Your sword is at your side.

DON JUAN. — Oh, if you have
No patience, very well.... — (*They fight.*)

LAURA. — Oh! oh! Juan!...
(*Throws herself on the bed. DON CARLOS falls.*)

DON JUAN. Get up, my Laura, it's all over.

LAURA. — What
Lies there? He's killed? How lovely! In my room!
And what shall I do now, you scapegrace, devil?
And how shall I dispose of him?

DON JUAN. — Perhaps
He's still alive. (*Examines the body.*)

LAURA. — Alive, forsooth! Why look,
You wretched man! You pierced him through the
heart — ,
No fear, you didn't miss! No blood is flowing
From the three-cornered wound, nor is he breathing.
So what do you say now?

DON JUAN. — It can't be helped.
He asked for it himself.

LAURA. — Ah, Don Juan,
It's most annoying, really. Your old tricks!...
And yet you're ne'er to blame! Whence come you
now?
How long have you been here?

DON JUAN. — I just arrived
And on the quiet — for I've not been pardoned.

LAURA. And instantly you recollected Laura?
So far so good. But stop! I don't believe you.
You happened to be passing through the street,
And saw my house.

DON JUAN. — NO, Laura, you can ask
My servant Leporello. I am lodging
Outside the city in a wretched tavern.
For Laura's sake I'm visiting Madrid. (*Kisses her.*)

LAURA. You are my darling!... Stop... not right
before
The dead man! Oh, what *shall* we do with him?

DON JUAN. Just leave him here — before the break of day,
I'll take him out enfolded in my cloak,
And place him on the cross-roads.

LAURA. — Only look
That no one sees you. 'Twas a stroke of luck
Your visit was not timed a minute sooner!
Your friends were supping here with me. They just
Had left. Suppose that you had found them here!

DON JUAN. HOW long, my Laura, have you loved him?

LAURA. — Whom?
You must be raving.

DON JUAN. — Laura, come, confess
How many times you've been unfaithful since
My absence?

LAURA. — What about yourself, you scapegrace?

DON JUAN. Come, tell me... No, we'll talk about it
later!...

SCENE III

The Commander's Monument

DON JUAN. All's for the best: for, having slain Don Carlos

Without intent, in humble hermit's guise
I've taken refuge here — and every day
I see my charming widow, who has noticed
Me too, I think. Until the present we
Have stood on formal terms with one another;
To-day, however, I shall break the ice;
'Tis time! But how to start? "May I presume?"...
Or no: "Senora"... Bah! whatever comes
Into my head, I'll say spontaneously
Like one whose serenade is improvised.
It's time she came. Without her, I believe
The poor commander has a tedious time.
They've made him look a very giant here!
What mighty shoulders! What a Hercules!...
Whereas the man himself was small and puny;
If he were here and, standing on tip-toe,
Stretched out his arm, he could not reach his nose.
When hard by the Escorial we met,
He ran upon my sword-point and expired,
Just like a dragon-fly upon a pin.
But he was proud and fearless — and he had
A rugged spirit... there she is (*Enter DONA ANNA.*)

DONA ANNA. — Again
He's here. O father, I've distracted you
From holy meditations. Pardon me.

DON JUAN. 'Tis I who must beseech *your* pardon, rather,
Senora; for perhaps I am preventing
Your grief from flowing freely as it might.

THE STONE GUEST

DONA ANNA. NO, father, for my sorrow is within me.
E'en in your presence may my prayers ascend
Humbly to Heaven; and I beg you join
Your voice with mine.

DON JUAN. — I pray with Dona Anna!
A lot so happy I do not deserve!

These vicious lips of mine will never dare
Repeat your holy supplications; I
But from afar with reverence do look
On you, when, bowing silently, you spread
Your raven tresses o'er the pallid marble —
And then it seems to me that secretly
An angel has alighted on this tomb.
Within my troubled heart it is not prayers
That I find then. I stand in speechless wonder
And think — Oh! happy man, whose chilly marble
Is warmed with breath from her celestial lips
And with the tears of her great love bedewed.

DONA ANNA. Strange words are these!

DON JUAN. — Senora?

DONA ANNA. — Said to me!...
You have forgotten...

DON JUAN. — What? That I am only
A wretched hermit? That my sinful voice
Should not resound so loudly in this place?

DONA ANNA. It seemed to me... I did not under-
stand...

DON JUAN. Aha! I see; you have discovered all!

DONA ANNA. I have discovered! What?

DON JUAN. — That I'm no monk...
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And at your feet I humbly beg your pardon.

DONA ANNA. O Heavens! Pray get up! Who are you
then?

DON JUAN. Unhappy victim of a hopeless passion!

DONA ANNA. O God in Heaven! Here, before this tomb!
Begone!...

DON JUAN. A minute, Dona Anna, pray
A single minute!

DONA ANNA. — But if someone comes!...

DON JUAN. The gate is locked. A single minute, pray!

DONA ANNA. Well, come! What is it that you wish for?

DON JUAN. — Death!

Oh, let me die this instant at your feet,
And let my hapless dust be buried here,
Not near the dust of him who's dear to you,
Not on this spot — not near — but some way off,
There — at the very threshold — at the gate,
That there, in passing, you might touch my grave
With your light foot or with your garment's hem
Whene'er you come to bow your curly head
Upon this haughty monument and weep.

DONA ANNA. You've surely lost your senses.

DON JUAN. — Dona Anna,
To wish for death — is that a sign of madness?
Were I a madman, then would I be fain
To stay among the living, I'd have hope
Some day to touch your heart with tender love;
Were I a madman, I would spend the nights
Below your window and disturb your sleep
With serenades; I would not hide myself.
But, on the contrary, I'd strive to be
Observed by you wherever I might go;
Were I a madman, I'd refuse to suffer
In silence...

DONA ANNA. SO you call this silence, then?

DON JUAN. Chance, Dona Anna, carried me away;
For otherwise, you never would have learned
Of this, the gloomy secret of my heart...

DONA ANNA. And have you then been long in love with me?

DON JUAN. How long I've been in love I do not know.
But only since that hour I've known the value
Of this brief life, yes, only since that hour
I've understood what happiness could mean.

DONA ANNA. Begone! Begone! You are a dangerous man.

DON JUAN. Dangerous! How?

DONA ANNA. — I fear to listen to you.

DON JUAN. Then I'll be silent; only do not send
Away the man to whom the sight of you
Is all the consolation he has left.
I do not entertain audacious hopes,
Make no demands upon you, but I must,
If I am still condemned to live, have leave
To see you.

DONA ANNA. GO — for this is not the place
For words like these, for madness such as this...
To-morrow come to where I live; if you
Will swear to keep within respectful bounds,
I shall receive you — in the evening, later...
E'er since the hour that I became a widow
I have not seen a soul...

DON JUAN. — O Dona Anna! —
You angel! May God comfort you, as now
You offer balm to this unhappy soul!

DONA ANNA. Begone! Begone!

DON JUAN. — One minute more, I pray.

DONA ANNA. Well, then, 'tis I must go... Besides, my
mind
Is far from prayer. You've distracted me
With all your worldly talk; my ear to such
Has long been unaccustomed. — But to-morrow
I shall receive you...

DON JUAN. — Even yet I cannot
Believe, I cannot trust my happiness!
To-morrow I shall see you!... And not here,
And not by stealth!

DONA ANNA. — To-morrow, yes, to-morrow.
What is your name?

DON JUAN. — Diego de Calvado.

DONA ANNA. Farewell, Don Diego. — (*Exit.*)

DON JUAN. — Leporello!
(LEPORELLO *enters.*)

LEPORELLO. — What
Is now your pleasure?

DON JUAN. — Dearest Leporello!
What bliss! — "To-morrow, in the evening, later"
My Leporello, yes, to-morrow!... So
Prepare... I'm happy as a child!

LEPORELLO. — So you
Conversed with Dona Anna? Maybe she
Addressed to you a gracious word or two,
Or you bestowed on her your blessing.

DON JUAN. — NO,
My Leporello, no! An assignation,
An assignation has she granted me!

LEPORELLO. Can it be so? O widows, you are all
The same.

DON JUAN. Oh, what a happy man am I!
I'm ready to embrace the world — or sing!

LEPORELLO. And what will the commander have to say
About all this?

DON JUAN. You think he will be jealous?
No, truly; he's a man of common sense.
And surely has grown meeker since he died.

LEPORELLO. No, see his statue there.

DON JUAN. — Well, what?

LEPORELLO. — It seems
As though it's looking at you angrily.

DON JUAN. My Leporello, here's a notion: go
And bid it come to-morrow to my house —
No, not to mine — I mean to Dona Anna's.

LEPORELLO. Invite the statue! Why?

DON JUAN. — Well, certainly,
Not for the purpose of conversing with it.
But bid the statue come to Dona Anna's
To-morrow evening rather late and stand
On guard before the door.

LEPORELLO. — Here's an odd way
To jest! And jest with whom!

DON JUAN. — Go on!

LEPORELLO. — But...

DON JUAN — GO!

LEPORELLO. Most excellent and beautiful of statues!
My master, Don Juan, most humbly bids
You come... Good Lord, I cannot, I'm afraid.

DON JUAN. Coward! I'll give it to you!...

LEPORELLO. — Very well!
My master, Don Juan, doth bid you come
To-morrow rather late to your wife's house
And guard the door...
(*The statue nods.*)
Oh!

DON JUAN. — What's the matter there?

LEPORELLO. Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! I'll die!

DON JUAN. — Whatever's happened?

LEPORELLO. (*Nodding.*) The statue... Oh!

DON JUAN. — What's this you're doing — bowing?

LEPORELLO. NO, no, not I — but it!

DON JUAN. — What fiddle-faddle
Is this?

LEPORELLO. Then go yourself.

DON JUAN. — Well, look, you knave!
(*To the statue.*) Commander, I do herewith bid you

come

Unto your widow's house, where I shall be
To-morrow, and keep watch before the door.
Well? Will you? — (*Statue nods again.*)
God!

LEPORELLO. — I told you...

DON JUAN. — Let us go.

SCENE IV

DONA ANNA'S *Room*, DON JUAN *and* DONA ANNA.

DONA ANNA. Don Diego, I've received you; yet I fear
My melancholy conversation will
Soon bore you; wretched widow that I am,
I never can forget my loss. Like April
I mingle tears with smiles. But tell me why
Are you so silent?

DON JUAN. — I'm enjoying deeply
And silently the thought that I'm alone
With charming Dona Anna — here, not there
Beside that lucky dead man's monument —
And see you now no longer on your knees
Before your marble spouse.

DONA ANNA. — Don Diego, are
You jealous then? My husband tortures you
E'en in his grave?

DON JUAN. — I ought not to be jealous:
For he was your own choice.

DONA ANNA. — Oh no; my mother
Commanded me to marry Don Alvaro,
For we were poor and Don Alvaro rich.

DON JUAN. The lucky man! He brought but empty
treasures
To set before a goddess' feet; for that
He tasted all the bliss of paradise.
If I had known you first, with utter rapture
I'd have bestowed on you my rank, my wealth,
All, everything, for but one gentle glance!
Your slave, I would have held your wishes sacred!
I would have studied all your whims, that I
Might then anticipate them, that your life
Might be one long enchantment without end!
Alas! fate has decreed quite otherwise!

DONA ANNA. Ah, Diego, stop! 'Tis wrong of me to listen
To you — it is forbidden me to love you:
E'en to the grave a widow must be faithful.
If only you could know how Don Alvaro

Did love me! Oh, 'tis certain Don Alvaro,
Had he been left a widower, had ne'er
. Received into his house a lovelorn lady.
He would have kept his faith with spousal love.

DON JUAN. O, Dona Anna, torture not my heart
With everlasting mention of your spouse.
Pray cease from your chastisement, although I
Perhaps deserve chastisement.

DONA ANNA. — And pray how?
You are not bound, I think, by holy ties
To anyone? In loving me, you do
No wrong in Heaven's eyes or mine.

DON JUAN. — In yours!
O God!

DONA ANNA. It isn't possible you're guilty
Of any wrong to me? Or, tell me, how?

DON JUAN. NO, never!...

DONA ANNA. — Diego, tell me what you mean!
You've done me wrong? But tell me, how and when?

DON JUAN. NO, not for worlds!

DONA ANNA. — But, Diego, this is strange!
I ask you, I demand of you...

DON JUAN. — NO, no!

DONA ANNA. SO this is being docile to my will!
But what was that you said to me just now?
That you would like to be my very slave.
I'm getting angry, Diego; answer me,
In what way have you wronged me?

DON JUAN. — No, I dare
Not tell; you'd never want to look on me,
You'd fall to hating me.

DONA ANNA. — No, e'en beforehand
I pardon you, I only want to know...

DON JUAN. DO not desire to know this terrible,
This deadly secret.

DONA ANNA. — Deadly!... I'm in torment:
I'm full of curiosity — what is it?
I didn't know you — how could you offend me?
I have no enemies, and never had.
The only one is he who slew my husband.

DON JUAN. (TO *himself*.) The dénouement approaches!
- -Tell me now,
Did you e'er know the wretched Don Juan?

DONA ANNA. I never in my life set eyes on him.

DON JUAN. But in your heart you bear him enmity?

DONA ANNA. AS honor binds me. But you're trying now,
Don Diego, to divert me from my question —
I ask...

DON JUAN. Suppose that you should meet Don Juan?

DONA ANNA. I'd plunge a dagger in the villain's heart.

DON JUAN. Where is your dagger, Dona Anna? Here's
My breast.

DONA ANNA. O Diego! What is that you say?

DON JUAN. No Diego I — my name's Juan.

DONA ANNA. — O God!
No, no, it cannot be, I don't believe...

DON JUAN. I'm Don Juan.

DONA ANNA. — It isn't true.

DON JUAN. — I killed
Your husband; and have no regrets for that —
There is no trace of penitence within me.

DONA ANNA. What do I hear? No, no, it cannot be.

DON JUAN. I'm Don Juan, and I do love you.

DONA ANNA. (*Falling*.) — Where,
Where am I? Where? I'm fainting!

DON JUAN. — God in Heaven!
What's happened to her? Dona Anna, what's
The matter with you? Come, wake up, wake up,
And pull yourself together; at your feet
Your slave, your Diego kneels.

DONA ANNA. — Leave me alone.
(*Weakly.*) You are my enemy — you took away
From me all, all that in my life...

DON JUAN. — Dear creature!
I'm ready now to expiate that blow;
I only wait your order at your feet:
Command — I'll die; command — and I shall breathe
For you alone...

DONA ANNA. — So this is Don Juan?

DON JUAN. True, is it not, he's been described to you
As an outrageous villain and a monster.
O — Dona Anna, rumor is perhaps
Not wholly wrong; upon my weary conscience
There weighs, perhaps, a heavy load of evil;
I've long been an adept in lechery;
But since I saw you first all that has changed:
It seems to me, that I've been born anew!
For, loving you, virtue herself I love —
And humbly, for the first time in my life,
Before her now I bend my trembling knees.

DONA ANNA. Yes, Don Juan is eloquent — I know!
I've heard them say: he is a sly seducer,
A very fiend. How many wretched women
Have you destroyed?

DON JUAN. — Not one of them till now
Was I in love with.

DONA ANNA. — And shall I believe
That Don Juan at last has fallen in love,
That I am not another of his victims!

DON JUAN. If I had wished to dupe you, do you think
I would have thus avowed the truth or uttered
That name that you can hardly bear to hear?
What do you see of trick or craft in that?

DONA ANNA. Who knows your heart? But how could
you come here?
For anyone might recognize you here —
And then your death would be inevitable.

DON JUAN. Ah, what is death? For one sweet moment's
tryst
I'd give my life without a murmur.

DONA ANNA. — How
Will you escape from here, imprudent man?

DON JUAN. (*Kissing her hand.*) And so you are con-
cerned about the life
Of poor Juan! Then in your heavenly soul
There is not any hatred, Doha Anna?

DONA ANNA. Alas! if only I knew how to hate you!
But we must part.

DON JUAN. — When shall we meet again?

DONA ANNA. I do not know. Some time.

DON JUAN. — To-morrow?

DONA ANNA. — Where?

DON JUAN. Here.

DONA ANNA. O Don Juan, how weak a heart is mine!

DON JUAN. A quiet kiss in token of forgiveness...

DONA ANNA. It's time to go.

DON JUAN. — Just one, cold, quiet kiss...

DONA ANNA. Oh, how importunate you are! Well, there!
... (*A \noc\ at the door.*)
What is that knock I hear?... Oh, hide, Don Juan!

DON JUAN. Good-bye, until we meet again, my darling.
(*Goes out and runs in again.*)
Oh!...

DONA ANNA. What's the matter? Oh!
(Enter the STATUE of the commander;

DONA ANNA *falls.*)

STATUE. — Your call I've answered.

DON JUAN. O God! O Dona Anna!

STATUE. — Let her be,
All's over. You are trembling, Don Juan.

DON JUAN. I? No!... I bade you come; I'm glad to
see you.

STATUE. Give me your hand.

DON JUAN. — Here, take it... Oh, how heavy
The pressure of his cold and stony hand!
Release me, let me go, let go my hand!...
I'm perishing — all's over — Dona Anna!
(They sink into the ground.)

MOZART AND SALIERI



Translated by Genia Gurarie

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Antonio Salieri (1750-1825), an Italian composer, conductor and teacher; whose students included Franz Schubert, Ludwig van Beethoven and Franz Liszt

Scene 1

(A room)

Salieri

Some people say: there is no right on earth.
Not in the heavens, neither! This to me
Appears as clear as any simple scale.
I came into this world in love with art.
Yet on a childhood day, when in the heights
Of our old church the lofty pipes resounded,
I listened, and was lost in listening -- tears
Were pouring out, involuntary, sweet!
In early years I spurned all idle pastimes;
All sciences extraneous to music
Disgusted me; with obstinate disdain
I soon rejected them and gave myself
To music only. Hard the initial step,
And dull the initial path. I overcame
The first adversities. I put up craft
To constitute the pedestal of art.
I turned into a craftsman: to my fingers
I taught submissive, dry dexterity;
My ear, precision. Having stifled sounds,
I cut up music like a corpse. I measured
Harmony by arithmetics. Then only,
Well-versed in science, dared I give myself
To the sweet languor of creative fancy.
I started to compose, but still in silence,
Still secretly, not dreaming yet of glory.
Quite often, having sat in my mute cell
For two, three days - both sleep and food forgotten,
The thrill and tears of inspiration savored -
I burned my work, and frigidly observed
How my ideas, the sounds I had begotten,
Took flame and disappeared with the light smoke.
And what of that? When star-enchanted Gluck
Arose and opened up to us new secrets
(What candidly profound, what charming secrets!),
Did I not leave all I had known before,
And loved so much, and trusted with such fervor,
To follow him, submissively and gaily,
Like one who has gone errant yet encounters
A man to set him on a different course?
By arduous, ever-earnest constancy

At last in the infinity of art
I reached a high degree. Now glory smiled
Upon me finally; in people's hearts
I found strings consonant to my creations.
I was content; at peace I took delight
In my own work, success and glory -- also
In works and in successes of my friends,
My gentle comrades in the wondrous art.
No, never did I know the sting of envy!
O, never! -- neither even when Piccini
Knew how to charm the savage ears of Paris,
Nor when I got to hear for the first time
The initial harmonies of "Iphigenia"...
Who'd say that proud Salieri would in life
Be a repellent envier, a serpent
Trampled by people, gnawing sand and dust
In impotence? No one! And now -- I'll say it --
I am an envier. I envy; sorely,
Profoundly now I envy. -- Pray, o Heaven!
Where, where is rightness? when the sacred gift,
Immortal genius, comes not in reward
For fervent love, for total self-rejection,
For work and for exertion and for prayers,
But casts its light upon a madman's head,
An idle loafer's brow... O Mozart, Mozart!

(Enter Mozart.)

Mozart

Aha! You saw me! Damn - and I was hoping
To treat you with an unexpected joke.

Salieri

You here! -- since long?

Mozart

Just now. I had

Something to show you; I was on my way,
But passing by an inn, all of a sudden
I heard a violin... My friend Salieri,
In your whole life you haven't heard anything
So funny: this blind fiddler in the inn
Was playing the "voi che sapete". Wondrous!
I couldn't keep myself from bringing him
To treat you to his art. Entrez, maestro!

(Enter a blind old man with a violin.)

Some Mozart, now!

(The old man plays an aria from Don Giovanni; Mozart roars with laughter.)

Salieri
And you can laugh?

Mozart
Ah, come,
Salieri, aren't you laughing?

Salieri
No, I'm not!
How can I laugh when some inferior dauber
Stains in my view the great Raphael's Madonna;
How can I laugh when some repellent mummer
With tasteless parodies dishonors Dante.
Begone, old man!

Mozart
Hold on a moment: here,
Take this to drink my health.

(The old man leaves.)

You, my Salieri,
Seem squarely out of sorts. Well, I'll come back
Some other time.

Salieri
What did you bring me?

Mozart
This?
No, just a trifle. Late the other night,
As my insomnia was full upon me,
Brought some two, three ideas into my head;
Today I jot them down... O well, I hoped
To hear what you may think of this, but now
You're in no mood for me.

Salieri
Ah, Mozart, Mozart!
When am I ever in no mood for you?
Sit down; I'm listening.

Mozart

(at the piano)

Picture... well, whom should you?..

Say, even me -- a little younger, though;
In love -- not much, just lightly -- having fun
With a good-looking girl, or friend -- say, you;
I'm merry... All at once -- a deathly vision,
A sudden gloom, or something of that sort...
Well, listen.

(He plays.)

Salieri

You were bringing this to me
And could just stop and listen at some inn
To a blind fiddler scraping! -- Oh, my goodness!
You, Mozart, are unworthy of yourself.

Mozart

So, it is good then?

Salieri

What profundity!
What symmetry and what audacity!
You, Mozart, are a god -- and you don't know it.
But I, I know.

Mozart

Well! rightly? well, perhaps...
But My Divinity has gotten hungry.

Salieri

Then listen: how about we dine together,
Say, at the Golden Lion's Inn?

Mozart

So be it;
I'm glad. But let me first drop in at home
And tell my wife not to expect me later
For dinner.
(He leaves.)

Salieri

I am waiting; don't you fail me!
No, I cannot withstand it any longer,
Resist my destiny: I have been chosen
To stop him -- otherwise, all of us die!

All of us priests and votaries of music,
Not I alone with my faint-sounding glory...
What use is there in Mozart living on
And reaching yet to new and greater heights?
Will he thus lift up art? Not really: art
Will fall again as soon as he will vanish.
He will bequeath us no inheritor.
What use is he? Like some celestial cherub,
He came to bring us several tunes from heaven,
To rouse within us, creatures of the dust,
Wingless desire and fly away thereafter.
So fly away! the sooner now, the better.

Here's poison -- late Isora's final gift.
For eighteen years I've carried it with me,
And life since then has seemed to me quite often
A wound unbearable; and oft I sat
At the same table with a carefree foe,
And never to the whisper of temptation
Have I inclined -- although I'm not a coward,
Though I can feel profoundly the offense,
Though small my love for life. I kept delaying,
As thirst of death excruciated me.
Why die? I mused: perhaps yet life will bring
Some sudden gifts before me from her treasures;
Perhaps, I will be visited by raptures
And a creative night and inspiration;
Perhaps, another Haydn will create
New greatnesses -- wherein I will delight...
As I was feasting with a hateful guest --
Perhaps, I mused, I'm yet to find a worse,
More vicious foe; perhaps, a worse offense
Will crash upon me from disdainful heights --
Then you shall not be lost, Isora's gift.
And I was right! and I have found at last
My greatest foe, and now the other Haydn
Has filled me wonderfully with my rapture!
The time has come! Prophetic gift of love,
Transfer today into the cup of friendship.

Scene 2

(A special room at an inn; a piano. Mozart and Salieri at a table.)

Salieri
You seem a little down today?

Mozart
Me? No!

Salieri
You surely are upset with something, Mozart?
Good dinner, glorious wine, but you keep quiet
And sit there looking gloomy.

Mozart
I should own,
My Requiem's unsettling me.

Salieri
Your Requiem!--
You've been composing one? Since long ago?

Mozart
Long: some three weeks. A curious incident...
I haven't told you, have I?

Salieri
No.

Mozart
Then listen:
About three week ago, I came back home
Quite late at night. They told me that some person
Had called on me. And then, I don't know why,
The whole night through I thought: who could it be?
What does he need of me? Tomorrow also
The same man came and didn't find me in.
The third day, I was playing with my boy
Upon the floor. They hailed me; I came out
Into the hall. A man, all clad in black,
Bowed courteously in front of me, commissioned
A Requiem and vanished. I at once
Sat down and started writing it -- and since,
My man in black has not come by again.
Which makes me glad, because I would be sorry

To part with my endeavor, though the Requiem
Is nearly done. But meanwhile I am...

Salieri

What?

Mozart

I'm quite ashamed to own to this...

Salieri

What is it?

Mozart

By day and night my man in black would not
Leave me in peace. Wherever I might go,
He tails me like a shadow. Even now
It seems to me he's sitting here with us,
A third...

Salieri

Enough! what is this childish terror?
Dispel the empty fancies. Beaumarchais
Used to instruct me: "Listen, old Salieri,
Whenever black thoughts come into your head,
Uncork yourself another Champagne bottle
Or reread 'Le mariage de Figaro.'" "

Mozart

Yes! I remember, you were boon companions
With Beaumarchais; you wrote "Tarare" for him --
A glorious thing. It has one melody...
I keep on singing it when I feel happy...
La la la la... Ah, is it right, Salieri,
That Beaumarchais could really poison someone?

Salieri

I doubt he did: too laughable a fellow
For such a serious craft.

Mozart

He was a genius,
Like you and me. While genius and evildoing
Are incompatibles. Is that not right?

Salieri

You think so?

(Throws the poison into Mozart's glass.)

Well, now drink.

Mozart

Here is a health
To you, my friend, and to the candid union
That ties together Mozart and Salieri,
Two sons of harmony.

Salieri

But wait, hold on,
Hold on, hold on!.. You drank it!.. Without me?

Mozart

(throws his napkin on the table)
That's it, I'm full.
(He goes to the piano.)
And now, Salieri, listen:
My Requiem.
(He plays.)
You weep?

Salieri

Such tears as these
I shed for the first time. It hurts, yet soothes,
As if I had fulfilled a heavy duty,
As if at last the healing knife had chopped
A suffering member off. These tears, o Mozart!..
Pay no respect to them; continue, hurry
To fill my soul with those celestial sounds...

Mozart

If only all so quickly felt the power
Of harmony! But no, in that event
The world could not exist; all would abandon
The basic needs of ordinary life
And give themselves to unencumbered art.
We're few, the fortune's chosen, happy idlers,
Despising the repellent cares of use,
True votaries of one and only beauty.
Is that not right? But now I'm feeling sick
And kind of heavy. I should go and sleep.
Farewell then!

Salieri

See you later.
(Alone.)
You will sleep

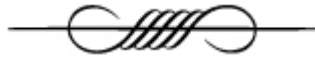
For long, Mozart! But what if he is right?
I am no genius? “Genius and evildoing
Are incompatibles.” That is not true:
And Buonarotti?.. Or is it a legend
Of the dull-witted, senseless crowd -- while really
The Vatican’s creator was no murderer?

THE END

The Criticism



THE ROMANTIC POETS: POUSHKIN by Rosa Newmarch



RUSSIAN society was now expectant of some consummate manifestation of national genius. Lomonossov had awakened the intellect of the country and provided it with a literary language; dignified, correct, based on the classical traditions of the eighteenth century — the language of the panegyric ode and the metrical epistle. Karamzin had touched a frigid, artificial age by a senti-mentalism that was, however, only partly sincere. But, as Bielinsky observed, tears — even factitious — marked an advance in the evolution of Russian society. Krylov had taught society to laugh, as Karamzin taught it to weep, but more naturally. He held up a mirror in which, for the first time, the nation saw itself reflected as it actually was. Not, indeed, with perfect fidelity, for the mirror of the satirist, pure and simple, generally distorts something; but Krylov's fables remain the first imperfect revelation of nationality in Russian literature. Joukovsky stirred both the heart and the imagination of the reader. The Russians now drank at the haunted well of romanticism; saw strange visions and were thrilled by new sensations. Joukovsky's unsubstantial, dreamy poetry had not sufficient stamina to form a new epoch, but through its agency society realised not only the movements of the outer world, but its own emotional capacities. By these various paths we have now reached that converging point at which we are confronted with a figure, greater than any we have yet considered, who seems to close the gates finally upon the old "preparatory period" of Russian literature and to point to a new road, leading on to nationality and independent creation.

Alexander Sergeivich Poushkin was born at Moscow on May 26th, 1799. His father — the poet was proud to remember — was the descendant of an old, although not a titled, family. A man of many accomplishments, he took a lively interest in the various literary movements of his day, and was inclined to the Voltairean philosophy. The poet's uncle, Vassily Lvovich, was even better known in the fashionable and cultured world, as a member of that famous literary society, the "Arzamas," and as the writer of smooth and flowing verses, from which Poushkin learnt much of his technical skill. The brothers Serge and Vassily Poushkin were representative types of the absentee aristocracy in Russia at the close of the eighteenth century: easy-going, hospitable, and highly, if somewhat superficially, cultured. Country life to them and their like meant intolerable boredom; nor did they trouble to inquire into the condition of their property so long as it yielded the wherewithal to support them in a kind of dilapidated splendour in Moscow. Their town house, with its superb furniture and rich hangings in one room, its bare walls and rush-seated chairs in another, was highly characteristic of the manner of living among the poorer Russian aristocracy, then, and at a

much later date.

On the maternal side Poushkin's descent was less impeccable, although he did his best to set his maternal grandfather in a picturesque and romantic light. The poet's mother was the granddaughter of Ibrahim Hannibal, a negro sent to Peter the Great — an amateur of all such "curiosities" — by the Russian ambassador at Constantinople. Hannibal's boyhood was spent at Court, and afterwards he was sent to Paris, although not under such luxurious circumstances as Poushkin depicts in his *Memoirs* of his ancestor, whom he euphemistically describes as "Peter the Great's Arab." The physiognomy of the poet himself, the thick lips, crisp, curly hair, and the nose which broadens and flattens across the nostrils, all point to an admixture of pure *negro*, rather than of *Arab* blood. In spite of a veneer of education, Hannibal appears to have retained a good deal of the savage in his nature. The poet's grandfather, Ossip Hannibal, was also a man of violent temper and unbridled passions, and Poushkin himself was sensible of what in moments of cynical frankness he calls "the inherited taint of negro concupiscence." His grandmother, whose brief, unhappy married life came to an end in 1784, when Ossip Hannibal was tried and found guilty of bigamy, was a woman of character, who exercised considerable influence on the poet's early years.

Until seven years of age Poushkin showed no signs of intellectual superiority. On the contrary, he was so unnaturally dull and heavy that he gave his parents serious cause for anxiety. The shy, unattractive child was neglected by his mother in favour of his sister Olga and his younger brother Leo. The sole friends of his early childhood were his grandmother and his nurse, Arina Rodionova. The latter, a typical specimen of the old-fashioned, devoted family servant, had the whole world of Russian folk-lore at her finger-ends, and from her Poushkin first acquired his intimate knowledge of the national songs and legends. His grandmother also stirred his historical interest by relating her reminiscences of the splendour of Court life under the great Empress Catharine II. After he had passed his seventh year, Poushkin's entire constitution underwent an almost miraculous change. He lost his heavy gait and stolid air, becoming active and sprightly. His father now began to interest himself in the boy's education, and several foreign teachers were engaged for him. By the time he was nine he had already evinced that passionate enthusiasm for literature which never waned at any moment of his career. Skabichevsky, speaking of this period of Poushkin's life, says: "Private theatricals and *jeux d'esprit* of all kinds were constantly going on at home, and the children were allowed to take part in them. It is not surprising that before he was twelve Poushkin made his first attempts at writing verses." These verses were in the style of La Fontaine or Voltaire, and his little plays were borrowed from Molière, for French was the language in which he thought and wrote in his childhood.

Poushkin's parents, who had felt such anxiety as to his sluggish temperament, were now equally alarmed at "the spirit of unresting flame" which seemed to possess him. He threatened to become unmanageable on

account of his quick temper and exuberant vitality, therefore it was decided to send him to school. In August, 1811, Poushkin entered the Lycée for the sons of the nobility, at Tsarsky Selo.

Like many another poet, Poushkin proved an unsatisfactory scholar. The director of the Lycée prophesied a poor future for the youth who neglected his legitimate studies for desultory reading in the school library, and wasted valuable hours in editing the school magazine. His earliest published verses appeared in the *Europy Vestnik* in 1814, over the signature "Alexander N. K."; and the following year his full name was revealed to the literary world. In January, 1815, a public examination took place at the school, to which many important officials were invited. Among the visitors was Derjavin. The old poet's attention was attracted to Poushkin when the latter came forward to recite his own verses, "Reminiscences of Tsarsky Selo." He carried back to Petersburg a lively impression of the youth's genius and a copy of the verses he had recited. From that moment Poushkin's name became known to the chief literary men of the day. Joukovsky, then at the zenith of his popularity, conceived the highest hopes of Poushkin's future; and such was his belief in the lad's innate genius that he did not hesitate to submit his own poetry to this critic of sixteen. Henceforward Joukovsky showed a paternal affection and solicitude for Poushkin, who, in his turn, used to call the older man his "guardian angel." The following year Karamzin settled for a time at Tsarsky Selo, and renewed his acquaintance with Poushkin, whom he had seen as a child at his father's house in Moscow. Their relations became intimate, and chapter after chapter of the famous *History* was read aloud to Poushkin by the author. Encouraged by the appreciation of such authorities, the young man devoted himself almost entirely to the development of his poetic gift. At school he wrote about two hundred lyrics and epigrams, and the sketch of a longer poem, "Russian and Lioudmilla."

Poushkin left school in 1817, and shortly afterwards entered a regiment of foot guards. Henceforth he embarked upon that strange dual existence which gives to his career an air of inconsistency, and makes many of his actions and opinions so difficult to interpret. He possessed a fine physique; was a keen sportsman, an excellent athlete, an accomplished horseman, and one of the best pupils of the famous fencing-master Belville. He had, in fact, all the qualities which contributed to make him popular in the fashionable military set in which he was now launched. The unsavoury chronicle of intrigues, duels, and excesses of all kinds in which he indulged at this period of his life has probably lost nothing in transmission. It is doubtful whether Poushkin or Byron were as black as they painted themselves and so induced others to paint them. Poushkin undoubtedly maintained a lofty and almost sacerdotal conception of the poet's mission, and would break away suddenly from his unwholesome surroundings at some secret prompting of his inspiration. Like Dagonet, he "wallowed, then he washed"; after which he would soar on wings apparently unsoiled to the rarefied atmosphere of the sublime.

The dualism of his moral life is equally apparent in his attitude towards social and political questions. He was a welcome member of the "Arzamas," a society formed in support of such moderate literary and social reformers as Karamzin and Joukovsky, in opposition to the "Shishkovists," or blind adherents of past tradition. The period was marked by a craze for societies of every kind, open or secret, political, literary, masonic, or bacchanalian. In the last category we may place "the Society of the Green Lamp," to which Poushkin and some of his brother officers belonged. But there were also other societies likely to prove still more dangerous to a hot-headed youth at the outset of his career. Such were the political unions, in which he imbibed ideas by no means in accordance with the liberal-conservatism of Joukovsky or Karamzin. The leading members of such secret organisations were Mouraviev, the two Ryleievs, Bestoujiev- Riumin, Pestel, and others; almost all involved in the unfortunate plot of December, 1825, and destined to end their days on the gallows or in Siberia.

It is not clear how far Poushkin was implicated in the doings of these secret societies. It is evident that for a time, at least, he was in sympathy with their designs and desired to take an active share in the liberal movement. His susceptible nature could not remain unaffected at a moment when "free thoughts like lightnings were alive" and running through all society. Perhaps it was fortunate for him that his aristocratic environment and a reputation for frivolity procured for him only a lukewarm reception among the conspirators. Partly from a real, but transient, enthusiasm, and partly for the sake of excitement and notoriety, he put his gifts at the service of the liberal cause. A number of his satirical verses were soon circulated in private, which increased his popularity, but placed him in a dangerous position with the Government. Two or three warnings and reprimands not having sufficed to teach Poushkin prudence, complaints of his conduct at length reached the ears of Alexander I, who threatened to send him to Siberia. Poushkin, now seriously alarmed, entreated Karamzin to intervene on his behalf. The historian promised, on condition that the young man ceased his attacks upon the higher powers. But even Karamzin's influence could not entirely avert punishment. Poushkin was not sent to Siberia, but transferred from the Guards to serve on a council of administration in the southern provinces of Russia.

The penalty exacted for his youthful indiscretions was not very severe, and actually proved a blessing in disguise. But although sustained by the consciousness of the martyr's role, and the knowledge that his friends at Court would do their best to shorten the period of his disgrace, Poushkin seems to have taken his exile in a bitter and resentful spirit.

No sooner had he arrived at Yekaterinoslav than he was laid up with a severe attack of fever. General Raevsky, the father of one of Poushkin's school friends, chanced to be passing through the town on his way to take over a command in the Caucasus. Pitying the young man in his sickness and solitude, Raevsky obtained leave to take him up to the hills. The time

which Poushkin spent with the Raevsky family was one of the happiest and most stimulating in his career.

The grandeur of the Caucasian scenery stirred his imagination and gave a new direction to his thoughts. At this time, too, he first became acquainted with Byron's poetry. During this visit, and later on, while staying with the Raevskys at their estate at Kamenka, he found himself in a circle of enthusiastic Byron worshippers. The circumstances of his own life at the time, his sense of rebellion against society, his resentful misanthropy, all contributed to make him fall an easy victim to the Byronic fascination. The Polish poet, Mickiewicz, describes this influence in picturesque, if somewhat exaggerated, terms. "Poushkin," he says, "fell into Byron's sphere of attraction, and revolved round this orb like a planet lighted by its rays. In the works of this period all is Byronic — the subjects, characters, ideas, and forms." But Mickiewicz does not regard Poushkin as a mere imitator of the English poet; he considers him not so much a *Byronist* as a *Byroniac* — possessed by the spirit of Byron. Later on I shall endeavour to show the extent and intensity of Byron's influence upon Poushkin's works; for the present I am only concerned with its immediate effect upon his manner of life. The side of Byron which appealed most directly to Poushkin and to his generation was not so much his pessimism as his contempt for social observances; his rebellion against traditional and prescribed morality and his haughty individualism. Pypin thinks this side of Byronism was really of service to Russian society, since "it raised the tone of the *intelligentsia* and taught a man to be the master of his own individuality. Poushkin and his friends seemed as anti-Christ to the hypocrites of their day; not because they upheld in their writings any special political or philosophical ideas, but because of their whole mode of existence: their fantastic style of dress, the occasions they gave for scandal, and their passion for duelling."

From Kamenka, Poushkin was recalled to accompany his chief to Kishiniev, in Bessarabia, where a picturesque and motley population, Greek, Moldavian, Turkish, and Italian, offered material which was not lost upon his artistic perception.

Here he reverted to the disorderly life which had so nearly proved his ruin in Saint Petersburg. Poushkin's intrigues and duels became the talk of the town. In the autumn of 1822, having been engaged overnight in an unusually fierce quarrel at the card tables, he was ordered by his long-suffering chief to repair to the neighbouring town of Ismail until the scandal had blown over. On the road Poushkin fell in with a band of gipsies and joined them for a time in their wandering life. The outcome of this episode was his poem *The Gipsies*, with its misanthropical hero, Aleko — the type of social exile Poushkin would naturally create at the height of his Byronic infatuation. From Kishiniev he was transferred to Odessa, where he found himself under Veron-tsiev, a far more exacting chief, who treated him merely as an official and made no allowances for the aberrations of genius. At Odessa Poushkin fell under the influence of an Englishman who seems

to have been a disciple of Shelley. Having imbibed the principles of “the only intellectual atheist I ever met,” he wrote to a friend announcing the result of these “lessons in pure atheism.” The letter was intercepted, and Poushkin, now convicted of irreligion, besides being suspected of disloyalty, fell once more under the displeasure of the Government. His official career, which must have been as perplexing to his superiors as Shelley’s brief university life to his college authorities, was prematurely cut short. He was ordered to set out immediately for his father’s property at Mikhailovsky, in the Government of Pskov, where he arrived in August, 1824. His position was virtually that of a prisoner on the paternal estate. Rumours of his lawless excesses, and, worse still, of his atheism, had preceded him, and his father, afraid of the moral contamination for his other children, forbade all intercourse between them and the returned prodigal. That Poushkin suffered very keenly under the parental suspicion is evident from a letter written to Joukovsky shortly after his arrival at Mikhailovsky. “Dear friend, I take refuge with you. Judge of my situation. When first I came here I was well received; but soon everything changed. My father, alarmed at my banishment, keeps on repeating that he expects to share the same fate. At first his irascibility and anger gave me no opportunity of explaining myself. I decided to say nothing. Then he began to reproach my brother, saying I was teaching him my atheism; but still I kept silence. Finally, wishing to extricate myself from such a sad position, I asked leave to speak out frankly — nothing more. My father lost his temper, sent for my brother, and told him not to associate *avec ce monstre de fils dénaturé*. Joukovsky, think of my situation and advise me! My head reels when I realise all this. I went again to my father; I found him in his bedroom, and poured out all that had been weighing on my heart for the last three months; I ended by saying that I spoke to him for the last time. Taking advantage of there being no witness of our interview, my father rushed from the room and declared to the whole household that I wished to kill him.... What is the object of this criminal accusation? To send me dishonoured to the mines of Siberia?... Save me from prison, or the Monastery of Solovets! Save me once more! Make haste, for my father’s accusation is known to every one in the house. No one believes it, but they all gossip. The neighbours know it. Soon it will reach the Government: you know what will happen. For me there is no court of justice. I am *hors les lois*.”

Joukovsky proved once again the “good angel” of the younger poet. The painful tension of the situation gradually relaxed, and Poushkin’s father returned to the capital, leaving his son in the position of a prisoner on parole.

The winter of 1824-5 was spent in solitude at Mikhailovsky. We may accept the fourth chapter of *Eugene Oniegin* as a fairly accurate picture of his life at this time. The enforced quiet, the long hours of reflection, followed by days of steady work, were not without a beneficial effect upon Poushkin’s moral and intellectual development. He now entered upon a new and more mature phase of life. The lessons in pure atheism were

counteracted by assiduous study of the Scriptures, the results of which we see in some of the works of this period, especially in that fine paraphrase of the sixth chapter of Isaiah, known to every educated Russian as "The Prophet." Byron's influence began to wane perceptibly, and that of Shakespeare to become paramount. Finally, the one thing most needful to his independent development began to show itself in his work — the element of nationality. In this remote country place, where his old nurse, Arina Rodionova, was often his sole companion, Poushkin's mind reverted to those treasures of folk-lore which she had instilled into him in childhood. This was undoubtedly the most important transition period in Poushkin's career. He now cast aside all that was vague and exotic in his work and began to concern himself with the actualities of contemporary life.

Eugene Oniegin, a novel in verse, begun under Byronic influences in South Russia, was continued at Mikhailovsky in a new spirit of unconscious realism.

Two versts from his father's property lay the estate of Trigovsky, the home of a charming family named Ossipov. In this quiet and gracious domestic circle Poushkin was a welcome guest. The two elder daughters of Madame Ossipov, by her first husband, Anna and Eupraskya Wulf, offered as piquant a contrast as the sisters Olga and Tatiana in *Eugene Oniegin*, and it is generally conjectured that Poushkin sketched the two heroines of his poem from these actual types of Russian womanhood.

Poushkin's art undoubtedly gained by his intercourse with this typically virtuous and cultured family. But it was impossible that his active mind and restless ambition should continue to be content within such a narrow social circle. At times he found the monotony of Mikhailovsky unbearable; and then he would indulge in wild schemes for making his escape abroad. In the autumn of 1825 he laid his plans, with the connivance of young Wulf, a student at the University of Dorpat. But in December, just as their scheme was ripe for action, one of the servants at Trigovsky returned from Saint Petersburg with the startling news of the "Decembrist" revolt. The roads, he said, were blocked by soldiers, and he had had some difficulty in making his way through the military cordon.

Poushkin was violently agitated by this intelligence. His exile at Mikhailovsky had sobered what was, after all, only a transient enthusiasm for the cause of rebellion. His midsummer madness of liberalism had certainly begun to wane. On the other hand, these men had been his associates, and he felt impelled by a generous feeling of comradeship to take part in the plot which he had had no hand in preparing. Early the next morning he started, determined to reach Petersburg at all risks. It is said that native superstition saved him from a tragic fate. Before he reached the first post-house he received warnings too dire to be disregarded by Russian credulity: first he met a priest; and in the fields a hare crossed his path three times. The former disciple of "pure atheism" retraced his steps, and well it was for Russian literature that he did so. It was enough that one poet of promise was actually offered on the gallows, a victim to his ill-devised and

untimely attempt to give Russia a constitution. Poushkin, with his previous record, could hardly have hoped for a more merciful doom than that of Ryleiev. A few days later came tidings of the complete failure of the plot and the arrest of the leaders. Looking back upon his narrow escape, Poushkin seems to have undergone a sudden revulsion of feeling. He hastened to burn all his compromising letters and the autobiography on which he was engaged.

Exceedingly weary of his sixteen months' banishment, and moved by that opportunist spirit which is one of Poushkin's least explicable characteristics, he was quick to see that his one chance of escape lay in a reconciliation with the new Government of Nicholas I. Early in 1826, therefore, Poushkin approached his influential friends in the capital in the hopes of being received once more into favour. In judging of his apparent inconsistency at this crisis of his life, we must make allowance for the fact that when he was associated with the Radical party, before his exile to South Russia, he was only twenty years of age, a time at which few men have formed settled convictions; and while there seems little doubt that Poushkin believed most sincerely in his own liberalism, it appears equally clear to us, who overlook his entire career, that the associations of birth and position were stronger than his youthful enthusiasms, and that he never was, by temperament or conviction, a true democrat. He had certainly travelled far from his immature views of 1820 when, six years later, he attempted this compromise with the Government. His firm belief in his vatic mission, and in the sacred personality of the Poet, gave keenness to his longing for a wider sphere of influence. We must agree with Pypin that at least "his was not that narrow opportunism without sense of honour," but rather an intense desire for activity which enabled him to bend himself to circumstances rather than stand aside in misanthropic idleness.

Early in September, 1826, Poushkin's old nurse arrived one morning at Trigovsky, where the poet was spending the night, with the startling intelligence that an imperial courier was awaiting him at Mikhailovsky. A post carriage was standing at his door, and Poushkin, without any explanation, was carried off, full gallop, to Moscow. He was driven direct to the Kremlin, and, still bespattered with the mud of his long, swift journey, was hurried into the presence of Nicholas I. Poushkin gives the following account of his interview: —

"The Emperor, having conversed with me for some time, finally asked, 'Poushkin, should you have taken part in the revolt of December 14th had you been in Petersburg?'

"Indubitably, *Gossoudar*; all my friends were in the plot, and I must have taken my share in it. My absence alone saved me — for which I thank God.'

"'You have committed follies enough,' replied the Emperor. 'Now I trust you are reasonable, and that we shall never quarrel again. You must send me all you write. I myself will be your censor.'"

Poushkin was deeply touched by this reception, and eager to take service under so generous a master, whose clemency would give him an opportunity of working untrammelled to some lofty end. An Emperor's censorship — so he believed — would be merely nominal. His quick imagination conjured up a rose-coloured vision which shut out the inevitable disenchantment beyond, and blinded him to those methods of an iron-handed policy which were to try his loyalty to the utmost. The news of Poushkin's pardon was received with intense enthusiasm in the literary circles of Moscow. Wherever he went the poet met with an ovation, and, in his first joy at finding himself once more in a congenial world, it is not surprising that he failed immediately to realise the irksome conditions upon which he had regained his freedom.

As time went on he learnt that suspicion once incurred was like a stain hopelessly, tragically indelible. "All the perfumes of Arabia" would never sweeten Poushkin's reputation in the nostrils of the Government. Count Benkendorf, watchful and suspicious, was then Minister of Police. He never lost sight of the poet's early indiscretions. Nicholas might be Poushkin's censor in name, the Count took care to be so in fact. Now began that long series of petty annoyances, restrictions, and reprimands which put the poet's life on a level with that of a ticket-of-leave man, and led to the disenchantment and acquiescent languor which, as Dobrolioubov observes, is the final stage in the career of almost every Russian poet.

Beneath the storms of cruel fate,
Faded my wreath of blossoms lies;
In sadness and in solitude
I linger, waiting for the end.

But before he reached the last stage Poushkin enjoyed some brief periods of comparative peace and untrammelled activity. They were soon interrupted. In 1827 he sent up a number of poems for the imperial approval. These were "The Upas Tree,"

"Stanzas," three more chapters of *Eugene Oniegin*, "Faust,"

"To Friends," and the "Songs of Stenka Razin." The majority of these works were passed; but of the last two Count Benkendorf wrote that "they were quite unsuitable for publication, not only as regards subject-matter, but because they were poor poetry; added to which the Church had excommunicated Stenka Razin equally with Pougachev." Under the stress of similar annoyances Poushkin became nervous and hypochondriacal; his life restless and disorganised. Sometimes he would throw himself into all the dissipations which surrounded him and seek distraction in cards and wine. Equally suddenly he would leave the town with a malediction on all its ways and bury himself in the country. Such reactions were beneficial to his literary production. Between 1827 and 1831 appeared the final chapters of *Eugene Oniegin*, *The Avaricious Knight*, *Don Juan*, *Poltava*, *Mozart and*

Salieri, and several minor poems and prose works.

In 1828 Poushkin became acquainted with the Goncharev family, and was introduced to their daughter at a ball. The girl was only fifteen, but Poushkin was captivated by her youthful beauty, and three years later, in February, 1831, their wedding took place in Moscow. The marriage was not altogether happy. For a few months the Poushkins led a gay and fashionable life in Moscow, and then set up their household at Tsarsky Selo. Here Poushkin renewed his intimacy with Joukovsky and, as though in friendly rivalry with him, wrote a series of national poems, some of which are considered his best works. These were: *The Lay of Tsar Saltan*, *The Lay of Priest Ostolop*, *The Dead Tsarevna*, and *The Golden Cock*. Such poems were the outcome of free inspiration and an impulse in favour of national themes; but about this time Poushkin's work began to show that tendency towards "official nationalism" which did nothing to avert the suspicion of the authorities, while it partially alienated the public sympathy.

Two poems published in August, 1831, show this inclination to pose as the champion of the social *status quo*. Had there been a laureate-ship in Russia, Poushkin might have been suspected of coveting the office. The Government did not fail to acknowledge his change of attitude.

In November he received a post in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs worth five thousand roubles a year. At the same time permission — amounting almost to a command — was given to him to search the Imperial Archives for material for a history of Peter the Great. A safe occupation for a poet of fiery temperament and liberal tendencies! The following years saw the completion of his *History of Pougachev's Rebellion* — a work which brought him in a considerable sum — of *The Captains Daughter*, one of his best prose tales, and of several poems, including "The Roussalka" and "Doubrovsky."

Poushkin threw himself into his historical studies with a fever born of discontent. His wife's style of living surpassed even his own in luxury and extravagance, and in spite of his official salary the pressure of debt was now added to his many troubles. A literary speculation, *The Contemporary*, started by him in all good faith as an organ which should aid the cause of progress and enlightenment while remaining loyal to the Government, did not prove the success he had hoped for. His position was indeed melancholy. His submission to authority had not won him the confidence of the Government, while it had undoubtedly estranged many of his most fervent admirers. He was keenly mortified by his failure to count as a great influence on either side; nor could he foresee a future in which — as has actually happened — his duality should cause him to be regarded as the representative of both phases of national sentiment.

Conscious that the great public was falling away from him, Poushkin addressed it directly in his poem "The People" with a bitterness and invective that recall, as Spassovich says, "the dispossessed Lear fleeing before the tempest." Yet the poet was at the climax of his intellectual development, and seems to have been on the eve of acquiring the self-

mastery and inward spiritual liberty of which no external circumstances could have had power to deprive him. A few years' grace, even if they had not brought him "the poet's rapt security," the clear vision and self-dependence of a Goethe, would at least have left him stronger, more finely disciplined and composed. He had begun to find out for himself that "though there is no happiness on earth, there may be peace and freedom."

A short time before his death a wave of depression seemed to sweep over his mind once more. In a letter to Madame Ossipov, his friend of years, he gives vent to a cry of despair: "I am bewildered and exasperated to the last degree. Believe me, life may have its pleasures, but every man bears some bitterness within which becomes intolerable in the end. The world is a disgusting and dirty swamp." There was much excuse for this pessimistic outbreak. The clouds appeared to be gathering over Poushkin's life for some inevitable catastrophe. Skabichevsky shows how a coalition had been formed against the poet in the fashionable world, instigated by Ouarov and Benkendorf. His enemies were only awaiting some chance of effecting his ruin, and the opportunity was not long in presenting itself. A flirtation — indiscreet, but not culpable — between Poushkin's young wife, then much fêted in society, and a youthful guardsman, Baron de Heckeren-Dantès, proved all-sufficient for their purpose. A scandal, reflecting unpleasantly on Poushkin's honour, was set afloat, while at the same time the poet was pestered with hateful anonymous letters. The effect of this cunningly directed friction upon Poushkin's hasty and undisciplined temper may be easily foreseen. It was essential that he should not lose his head and calmer judgment, for Dantès was under the special protection of the Emperor, and any rupture would be sure to give displeasure at Court. But Poushkin being hyper-sensitive and, moreover, the child of an age that recognised but one remedy for outraged honour, fell an easy victim into the trap prepared for him. He believed himself bound to challenge Dantès, and on January 27th, 1837, a duel with pistols was fought in which the poet was mortally wounded. Danzas, Poushkin's second, maintained that even at the last moment the meeting might have been prevented, since Benkendorf had been informed of its time and place, but sent the police — whether by accident or design none could ever prove — in a totally different direction.

Poushkin was carried back to his house in Saint Petersburg, where he died after two days of intense suffering. With the news of his death all Russian society awoke to the consciousness of its loss. The poet's weaknesses, his opportunism, his dalliance with both parties, were forgotten in a genuine outburst of sorrow and gratitude. Russia remembered only that Poushkin was the first and greatest of her national poets.

Of all the tributes to the memory of Poushkin, none awoke such enthusiasm as the impassioned verses which Lermontov — then scarcely known to fame — wrote in praise of "The Master." These were passed from hand to hand, and afterwards, when the ten thousand printed copies were exhausted, from mouth to mouth.

Every class desired to honour the dead poet, but official suspicion dogged Poushkin, even to the grave. Fearing a demonstration, orders were given to remove his coffin to the church on the evening of February 1st. Admission to the requiem service was by ticket only, and thus the public was excluded from paying respect to his memory. Two days later, escorted by the police, Poushkin's remains were removed during the night and interred near those of his mother in the Sviatogorsky Ouspensky Monastery.

POUSHKIN: HIS WORKS by Rosa Newmarch



Bielinsky's weighty articles, written between 1843 and 1846, remain to this day the sole exhaustive review of Poushkin's poems, and continue to form the basis of all close analysis of his work. But even these criticisms are lacking in the complete insight which comes of biographical research.

For many years after Poushkin's death the suspicion which still attached to his name, and the close censorship exercised over the publication of his literary remains, proved hindrances to the preparation of a complete biography of the poet. His life had to be largely compiled from hearsay, and when the first instalment of it appeared — which was not until twenty years after his death — it did not do much to elucidate certain matters which could not be safely handled even at that distance of time. To analyse his poetry in the light of biographical facts remained for years an impossibility, therefore Bielinsky's review of Poushkin's life-work is complete only from the purely aesthetic side. When at last the inner life of the man was revealed to the world, his moods, theories, and social views, public opinion was sharply divided, and every section of a disunited society strove to claim Poushkin as its own. He was hailed in turn as the defender of tradition, as the champion of social liberty, as the high-priest of pure art, as the founder of modern realism. And owing to the complexity of Poushkin's nature, these apparently irreconcilable claims have all some foundation of reason. Poushkin was essentially the child of his country and of his age, in whom were reflected all the varying shades of thought and emotion with which he was surrounded. Spassovich compares Poushkin's genius to a placid sheet of water, the surface of which is broken into circles that touch and interlink, each of these rings representing some sphere of external influence which widens and vanishes as it grows more remote from its centre. But Spassovich does not sufficiently realise that these reticulations were mainly superficial and scarcely disturbed the actual depths of Poushkin's individuality.

The poems dating from his schooldays, and the early satirical or "pamphlet" verses, are chiefly interesting as showing the extraordinary rapidity of his intellectual growth, and the care which, from the first, he bestowed upon the technical side of his art. We discern the influence of Joukovsky in the romantic colouring of some of these juvenile poems, and that of Batioushkov in the chiselled excellence of their workmanship. "Though they have not the quality of Byron's 'Hours of Idleness,'" says Bielinsky, "they astonish us by their elegance and felicity." In the verses entitled "To my comrades on leaving school," we find this lad of sixteen striving already after novelty of rhyme and rhythm, and venturing to use the simplest words, when they served his purpose, in preference to the insipid euphemisms of the pseudo-classical school. The popularity of his witty and

epigrammatic verses was extraordinary, even at a period when that kind of anonymous literature was a feature of social life. "At that time," says a contemporary, "there was not a single ensign in the army, however illiterate, who did not know these verses by heart. Poushkin was the echo of his generation with all its faults and virtues."

The political extravagances of Poushkin's youth have been severely censured by some of his critics. Pypin, whose opinions are almost invariably just, because based upon a wide historical outlook, reminds us that his instability and lack of definite social convictions were the natural outcome of that period of unrest, when even Alexander I himself was carried away, first by Western liberalism and afterwards by the general reaction. One thing may be said in favour of Poushkin's satire: it was nearly always directed against what was actually injurious to society, and never used as the weapon of mere personal spite.

Upon the political verses followed a group of transitional poems, in which the influence of his Russian precursors is perceptibly on the wane, and that of Byron claims the ascendancy. One of the first indications of this phase is shown in a short poem, "The Black Shawl," a Moldavian song which the poet overheard in a tavern at Kishiniev, and afterwards adapted to his own fancy, infusing into it a drop of the true Byronic essence. Since this poem marks the starting-point of a new departure in Poushkin's career, I avail myself of Professor Morfill's kind permission to reprint his translation of it among the examples at the close of this chapter.

In *The Prisoner in the Caucasus* Spassovich sees "The Corsair" in another dress. But even this early poem, written at a time when Poushkin's admiration for Byron was in its most ardent and uncritical stage, marks the essential difference between the temperaments of the two poets. Poushkin's hero has far less of the self-centred, savage misanthropy of the Corsair; his dissatisfaction with society turns to brooding melancholy rather than to fierce protest. Speaking of this work in later life, Poushkin said, "It contains the verses of my heart," but his artistic judgment condemned it in his maturity.

The Fountain of Bakchisarai (1822) shows a steady advance in individuality, and when we come to *The Gipsies* (1824) and *Poltava* (1828), the difference in method and sentiment between master and disciple is distinctly noticeable. Aleko, the hero of *The Gipsies*, belongs to the picturesque type of social outcast who figures again and again in the works of both Byron and Poushkin. But Poushkin was already outgrowing the sombre self-sufficiency which made Byron pose as the leading character in most of his romantic poems. The Russian poet now began to regard his creation from an objective standpoint, sometimes even from a critical one. Byron, we feel sure, was in fullest sympathy with Conrad, Lara, and the Giaour; but when Poushkin puts into the mouth of the old gypsy leader his dignified reproof to the guest who has brought discord and bloodshed into the free and simple life of the caravan, we suspect that it is the poet himself who is criticising Aleko's unprofitable egoism. *The Gipsies* marks the

second phase of Poushkin's worship of Byron.

A further stage of independent development is reached in *Poltava* which some critics rank as Poushkin's finest achievement. The poem shares the same subject as Byron's "Mazeppa," but here the difference of treatment is not only due to temperamental causes, but also to a widely different historical point of view. While Byron founded his poem on a passage from Voltaire's *History of Charles XII*, Poushkin had recourse to national tradition; consequently his poem gains in convincing realism, although losing something in romantic glamour. Poushkin's Hetman of Cossacks is a rapacious, cunning, brutal soldier of fortune, scarcely a hero in any sense of the word. But the true hero of *Poltava* is not Mazeppa, but Peter the Great, whose character had an intense fascination for Poushkin, and to whose memory he dedicated one of the most powerful and polished of his poems, "The Bronze Horseman."

In none of Poushkin's works, however, can we trace his gradual emancipation from Byron's influence, and his steady progress towards independence and nationality, so clearly as in *Eugene Oniegin*. This, the most popular of his poems, also engaged his thoughts for the longest period; being, in fact, a kind of confession, or autobiographical record, extending over seven years of his life. In 1823 Poushkin wrote to Prince Viazemsky, that he had begun a novel in verse in the style of "Don Juan," and in his preface to the first chapter, published in 1825, he says that the opening of his work will recall "'Beppo,' the facetious work of the gloomy Byron." But a year later he had left all thought of imitation so far behind that he indignantly denied any connection between *Oniegin* and "Beppo" or "Don Juan." The subject of the poem is drawn from contemporary life, and the design is simple to the verge of naïveté. The scene is laid in the heart of rural Russia. The first chapter introduces Madame Lerin and her daughters, Tatiana and Olga, who, as I have already related, were undoubtedly sketched from the sisters Wulf, and the old servant, Nurse Philipievna, the original of whom may have been Arina Rodionova.

Tatiana, an inexperienced, country-bred girl, falls in love with Eugene Oniegin, a disenchanted, world-weary rake who, somewhat against his will, is spending a few weeks in the neighbourhood with his friend Lensky, a sensitive, passionate youth, fresh from a German university. Lensky's tender but rather morbid temperament is at once the foil and the complement of the cold-blooded, egotistical Oniegin. So, too, Tatiana and her sister Olga make up between them the perfect sum of Russian womanhood. Tatiana has the Slav melancholy and dreamy sentimentality. She is religious, but still half believes in the fantastic, supernatural world of the peasantry; the *domovoi* and the *roussalka* are realities to her. Her nature is sweet and sound to the core. Capable of folly for love's sake, she is incapable of dishonour. On the other hand, Olga is vivacious, practical, pleasure-loving, and, like Poushkin himself, something of an opportunist. As the time for Oniegin's departure draws near, Tatiana, with a want of reserve pardonable to her exceeding youth and innocence, confesses her

love for him in a tender and indiscreet letter. By this time she has exalted Oniegin into a Galahad. He is incapable of understanding the motives which inspire her, or the timid shame which follows her action. To him the savour of love lies “not in the woman, but the chase” ; since this unsophisticated country-girl seems to him at once an insipid and a forward “miss,” he shakes her off, and reads her a cruel and cynical lesson. Meanwhile, being bored, he passes the time by flirting with Olga, who does not take life with such tiresome seriousness. Unhappily, Lensky’s undisciplined nature flashes out at once into fierce jealousy and almost childish resentment of this conduct. A duel follows, foolish and causeless enough, as the critics have constantly pointed out, but not untrue to the morality and customs of the period. Oniegin shoots Lensky, and, heartless as he is, feels the sting of remorse. Having, like Childe Harold, run “through sin’s long labyrinth,” he now seeks forgetfulness from his troubled conscience in travel. Several years elapse, and Tatiana, married to an elderly husband whom she respects, has developed into a beautiful and brilliant woman of the world. Oniegin, on his return to Russia, meets her in society, and conceives a wild passion for the woman whose virginal love he had despised. Tatiana has never forgotten her early love; but she no longer feels for Oniegin the enthusiastic hero-worship with which he first inspired her. Hers is a saddened and chastened affection, in which disenchantment plays a part. She listens to Oniegin’s impassioned declaration, and does not hide from him the fact that she loves him still. But, at the critical moment, her sense of moral obligation triumphs, and she finds courage to give him his final dismissal.

Such is the simple basis of the poem into which Poushkin has infused so much of his best thought and most intimate feeling; such the work which excited the wonder and admiration of a whole generation, who saw, for the first time, Russian scenery and Russian social life depicted with a touch of *realism* — a quality so novel that it had not yet found a term of expression. The elements of nationality and realism combined carried away the Russian public. Each new chapter of *Eugene Oniegin* was eagerly awaited and devoured with unflagging interest.

A generation later the temper of the reading public in Russia underwent a complete change. The question of the sixties — that period of social and political unrest — was the submission of art to the requirements of everyday life. The utilitarians of those days repudiated *Eugene Oniegin* as a picture of Russian life and morals, and refused to Poushkin anything but a superficial relationship to the “national idea,” as they themselves conceived it. It was idle, they argued, to waste time on the contemplation of anything, however beautiful, which did not tend to the solution of the great and pressing problems of social and political reform. Dobrolioubov and Pissariev, the representatives of utilitarianism, swept aside the theory of “art for art’s sake,” not in order to advance a new aesthetic doctrine in its place, but because art, pictorial and literary, seemed of no account to them except as a stepping-stone to their ultimate goal — the triumph of democratic

principles. In stripping the laurels of nationality from Poushkin's head to place them on Gogol's brow, Dobrolioubov admits that with the poet literature first began to penetrate the social life, but concerned itself only with superficialities: the charms rather than the realities of existence.

To some extent Dobrolioubov was justified in his criticism. Contemporary questions were certainly not of the first interest to Poushkin. His aristocratic prejudices, and the cosmopolitan views he had imbibed early in life from a succession of foreign tutors, debarred him from identifying himself completely with the people; while his lofty conception of the poet's mission caused him to look with disdain upon those who held the belief that man could live by bread alone.

The economic scientists resented this Olympian attitude. Dobrolioubov's point of view is so characteristic of the change which was sweeping over Russian society in the early sixties that I feel constrained to quote him at some length. "We must acknowledge with considerable satisfaction that the class depicted by Poushkin — those who stood nearest to him and consequently interested him most — formed but a small minority. We feel satisfaction, because if the majority of the Russians had been of the same gifted type as Aleko and Oniegin, and if, being in the majority, they had remained such dandies as those gentlemen — Muscovites masquerading in Childe Harold's cloak — it would have proved a sorry business for Russia. Fortunately they were exceptions, and their likeness was not only incomprehensible to the people at large, but failed even to interest the greater portion of the educated public.... Poushkin was oppressed by the emptiness and triviality of life; but this oppression, like that of his hero, Eugene Oniegin, was a sterile despair. He saw no issue from the void. There was nothing within from which he could rise to any serious convictions. He could only pour out his lyrical grievances.

There lies no goal before me,
My heart is void, my brain is idle,
And I weary of the anguish
Of life's monotonous din."

Dobrolioubov doubted the national significance of *Eugene Oniegin*. Pissariev went a step farther, and denied Poushkin's claim to be considered, in any sense, a great poet. Pissariev, who represented the ultimate expression of the utilitarianism of his day, was a strong writer, possessing a wide knowledge of all strata of Russian society; inspired by an ardent enthusiasm for the cause of social freedom, but unsound as a critic by reason of his boundless self-sufficiency and disregard of all aesthetic interests which could not be made to serve party purposes. The type of reviewer who would always have preferred the Corn Law Rhymer to Keats; a Russian Jeffrey without the English critic's orderly mind. In his literary fists the most delicate Nankin would soon be reduced to a pile of potsherds. *Eugene Oniegin* easily becomes the butt of his cheap

facetiousness. He compares the world-weariness of the hero to the repletion of a greasy merchant, who, having emptied his third samovar, regrets his inability to polish off thirty-three. Tatiana — prototype of so many Russian heroines — is quickly rifled of her delicate charms because she falls short of the healthy requirements of the new naturalism. “Our little Poushkin,” says Pissariev, in concluding his review of the poet’s works, “is merely an artist — nothing more. That is to say, he uses his artistic virtuosity as a medium whereby to let the whole reading public of Russia into the melancholy secret of his inward emptiness and intellectual weakness.”

Such views are peculiarly representative of those phases of intolerant utilitarianism which from time to time have proved so inimical to the development of the arts in Russia. Pushed at moments to the verge of a literary terrorism, this dogmatic criticism has clamoured for the denouncement of every writer who has refused to pronounce the shibboleth of the extreme Radical party.

The rough-and-ready arguments of Pissariev notwithstanding, the influence of *Eugene Oniegin* upon succeeding literary generations cannot be denied. Lensky and Oniegin, even more than Tatiana and Olga, are the prototypes of contrasting individualities reincarnated over and over again in Russian fiction. Oniegin, with his intellectual gifts, his disdain of everyday life, and his studied impassivity which passes for strength of character, created a favourite hero with the Russian novelists. Lensky’s morbid sensibility, his tenderness and charm, and his fatal lack of will-power are continually repeated by writers from Poushkin to Tolstoi. He represents the individuality foredoomed to effacement in the presence of the egoist of the Oniegin type. “Such a fate,” says Golovin, “is shared by a long series of Tourgeniev’s ‘superfluous people’ — the last of all being Nejdanov. The same with Tolstoi, who was the first to bow the knee before the innate virtues of weak and gentle characters in preference to the strong and proud. Sometimes we see these twins united in one personality, in whom, under an external show of strength, lies concealed some incurable weakness. Such are Beltov, Tamarin, Roudin, Raisky, and Lavretsky.” The chief personalities in *Eugene Oniegin* have proved that they had sufficient vitality to outlive their old-fashioned environment, and to found a long line of fictional descendants. Long before Poushkin had completed *Eugene Oniegin*, he had discovered the limitations of his early model. “Byron,” he writes during this transition period, “can only draw one character — himself.” But Byronism had done its work in strengthening in Poushkin his sense of individual importance, and freeing him from the bands of convention by which Russian literature, hitherto an artificial rather than an indigenous growth, had been strictly bound.

From the time of his exile at Mikhailovsky in 1824, Poushkin rises in each subsequent work to greater artistic perfection, shows more mature originality, and attains to that objective plasticity by which he sometimes approaches Goethe and Shakespeare. The study of Karamzin and of the greatest of English dramatists now resulted in the historical play *Boris*

Godounov.

As in "Macbeth," ambition, coupled with remorse, is the moving passion of the play. The insane cruelty of Ivan the Terrible deprived Russia of almost every strong and helpful spirit, with the exception of the sagacious and politic boyar, Boris Godounov, the descendant of a Tatar family.

Brother-in-law of Ivan's half-witted heir, Feodor, he was already practically the ruler of Russia before ambition whispered that he might actually wear the crown. Only the young Tsarevich Dmitri, a child of six, stood between him and the fulfilment of his desires. In 1581 Dmitri was murdered, and suspicion fell upon Boris. The latter managed to exculpate himself, and in due course was chosen as Feodor's successor. He reigned wisely and with authority. But Nemesis only tarried, to appear ere long in the person of the False Demetrius, whose pretensions were eagerly supported by the Poles. Boris, unhinged by the secret workings of his conscience, mistook the pretender for the ghost of his victim, and temporarily lost his reason. The people, who had never quite reconciled themselves to a ruler of Tatar origin, wavered in their allegiance, and, urged on by Rome, the Poles took advantage of this opportunity to advance upon Moscow. At this critical juncture Boris was seized with illness. It was hinted that he had been poisoned. He lived long enough to nominate his son as his successor, and died in his fifty-sixth year, in April, 1605.

For intellectual force and fine workmanship there is much to be admired in *Boris Godounov*. But the insight, the passion, and copious humour of our Elizabethans find no echo in Poushkin. We wonder what Webster would have made of this dark and lurid page of history. Poushkin has not the power to show us how

Rage, anguish, harrowing fear, heart-crazing crime
Make monstrous all the murderous face of Time... in the spherul orbit of a glass Revolving.

There are moments of forcible eloquence in *Boris Godounov*, and those portions of the play which deal with the Russian populace are undoubtedly the strongest. Here Poushkin disencumbers himself from theatrical conventions and shows direct observation of human nature, as well as an accurate knowledge of the national characteristics.

Like most of his predecessors, the poet possessed a wonderful faculty of assimilation, even, in some rare instances, improving what he borrowed. An interesting specimen of his powers in this respect is *A Feast during the Plague*, an adaptation of John Wilson's insipid drama *The City of the Plague*. Poushkin's work is only a fragment of the original, but it is impossible to compare the two works without being convinced that the Russian poet has actually performed the miracle of gathering figs from thistles. *The Avaricious Knight* is one of those clever pieces of literary mystification which were much in vogue at that period. Poushkin passed it off as a translation from the English poet Shenstone.

We have seen how the influence of Poushkin suffered a temporary eclipse during the acute political crisis of the sixties, when the works of

Nekrassov, the “poet of vengeance and of grief,” reached the climax of their popularity. It now remains to show how, twenty years later, the greatest Russian writers united to restore him to his rightful place in the hierarchy of Russian literature. This act of restitution took place at the ceremony of unveiling the Poushkin Monument in Moscow, July, 1880. On this occasion, Tourgeniev, Ostrovsky, Dostoievsky, and others addressed a vast assemblage, moved by one desire — to pay homage to the memory of the first national poet. From Ostrovsky’s speech I have already quoted a few significant words.

Tourgeniev spoke with the reserve which almost invariably characterised his verdicts upon Russian art and literature, yet he admitted that in Poushkin: “Russian genius and Russian receptivity are united in one harmonious whole; that the very essence of the Russian nationality is transfused into his works. Above all,” he concluded, “we find in Poushkin’s poems that great liberating force which ennobles and elevates all who come in contact with it.” Tourgeniev leaves us to deduce from his words what his habitual scepticism forbids him to assert — that Poushkin was not only a consummate artist, but a *national* poet in the truest sense of the word.

Some years previously, Gogol had already paid his tribute to the genius of Poushkin in these fervent words: “At the name of Poushkin we are impelled to cross ourselves, as it were, at the thought of our national poet; for no other Russian has an equal claim to his title. Poushkin is an extraordinary, perhaps a unique, phenomenon of the Russian spirit. He is a Russian in his final stage of development, as he may possibly appear two hundred years hence. In him the Russian soul, language, and temperament are reflected as clearly as a landscape is reproduced in the convex surface of a field-glass.”

It is, however, to Dostoievsky — speaking in Moscow on the occasion to which I have already referred — that we must look for the most impassioned vindication of Poushkin’s claim to the eternal veneration of his countrymen. Dostoievsky, with his penetrative insight into the human heart, his divination of intimate feeling and his inspired tenderness, saw further into Poushkin’s genius than any one else; saw things hidden from the “wise and prudent” critics of the type of Dobrolioubov and Pissariev, and revealed them in language which must have seemed to them exaggerated and mystical. I can only condense some of his most striking observations. Poushkin, he says, created two types, Onegin and Tatiana, who sum up the most intimate secrets of Russian psychology, who represent its past and present with all conceivable artistic skill, and indicate its future in features of inimitable beauty. In thus putting before us that type of Russian who is “an exile in his own land,” and divining his vast significance in the historical destiny of the nation, and in placing at his side the type of positive and indisputable moral beauty in the person of a Russian woman, Poushkin binds himself to his nationality by ties of kin and sympathy, as no writer ever did before, or has done since.

If to deliver a final judgment upon Poushkin has hitherto proved a task beyond the powers of the Russian critics, it would be presumptuous in a foreigner to attempt it. The most insuperable obstacle to a decisive opinion is to be found in the contradictions which lay at the root of the poet's life and character. It seems impossible to bring into agreement both sides of Poushkin's nature. On the one hand we see his aristocratic prejudices and his cosmopolitan outlook; on the other, his intimate acquaintance with many phases of Russian life and his love of the poetry of the people. Again, we see his generous aspirations towards freedom and enlightenment, coupled with an admiration for the Imperial system which certainly sprang from a deeper sentiment than mere "official" loyalty, assumed at the dictates of self-interest. How reconcile his rarefied idealism with his unconscious realism; his impulses of headstrong audacity with his moments of voluntary compromise; his phases of atheism with his hours of deep religious sentiment; his clear, sceptical intellect with the atmosphere of self-deception in which he could envelop himself at will? These inconsistencies must ever baffle and bewilder those who are not content to leave an absolute verdict in abeyance.

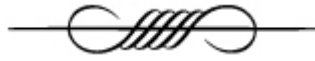
If to a more strenuous generation Poushkin appeared indifferent to the burning social questions of his day, it must be remembered that during the second and third decades of the nineteenth century Russian life was not the complex, heart-breaking tangle it has since become. Besides, is it not more than probable that Poushkin rendered a greater service to his country by being simply the great artist he was, than he would have done by subordinating his genius exclusively to social and political interests?

He embodied all that preceded him in Russian literature, while he also inaugurated a new period. He was the most perfect master of his material who had yet appeared in Russia, and never fails to impress us by the artistic skill with which he uses his native language as a tool which, though he had not actually forged it for himself, he learnt to temper and sharpen to the most delicate uses. Although he introduced the element of realism, he ignored its baser purposes. He ennobled everything he touched. He possessed an impeccable sense of form, an irresistible musical charm, and a felicity of expression and picturesqueness of vision which remain to this day his legacy to many Russian poets and novelists who followed him. Although his liberalism was not of the fervent, uncalculating kind which might have led him to share the fate of a Ryleiev or even of the exiled Tchernichevsky, it is an injustice to assert that he contributed nothing to the advancement of his time. Undoubtedly, in his own words, he "praised liberty and sang of mercy in an iron age." Some lines from one of his latest poems seem to indicate that, had he been spared, his work in future would have been more "lovely and more temperate," more fearless and serene: —

Be docile to God's will, O Muse.
Fear no affront and crave no laurel crown;
Meet human praise and blame alike unmoved,

Nor turn from out thy path to strive with fools.

LECTURES ON RUSSIAN LITERATURE: PUSHKIN by Ivan Panin



1. I have stated in the first lecture that I should treat of Pushkin as the singer. Pushkin has indeed done much besides singing. He has written not only lyrics and ballads but also tales: tales in prose and tales in verse; he has written novels, a drama, and even a history. He has thus roamed far and wide, still he is only a singer. And even a cursory glance at his works is enough to show the place which belongs to him. I say belongs, because the place he holds has a prominence out of proportion to the merits of the writer. Among the blind the one-eyed is king, and the one-eyed Pushkin — for the moral eye is totally lacking in this man — came when there as yet was no genuine song in Russia, but mere noise, reverberation of sounding brass; and Pushkin was hailed as the voice of voices, because amidst the universal din his was at least clear. Of his most ambitious works, “Boris Godunof” is not a drama, with a central idea struggling in the breast of the poet for embodiment in art, but merely a series of well-painted pictures, and painted not for the soul, but only for the eye. His “Eugene Onyegin” contains many fine verses, much wit, much biting satire, much bitter scorn, but no indignation burning out of the righteous heart. His satire makes you smile, but fails to rouse you to indignation. In his “Onyegin,” Pushkin often pleases you, but he never stirs you. Pushkin is in literature what the polished club-man is in society. In society the man who can repeat the most bon-mots, tell the most amusing anecdotes, and talk most fluently, holds the ear more closely than he that speaks from the heart. So Pushkin holds his place in literature because he is brilliant, because his verse is polished, his language chosen, his wit pointed, his prick stinging. But he has no aspiration, no hope; he has none of the elements which make the writings of the truly great helpful. Pushkin, in short, has nothing to give. Since to be able to give one must have, and Pushkin was a spiritual pauper.

2. And what is true of his more sustained works, is equally true of his lesser works. They all bear the mark of having come from the surface, and not from the depths. His “Prisoner of the Caucasus,” his “Fountain of Bachtshisarai,” his “Gypsies,” are moreover weighted down with the additional load of having been written directly under the influence of Byron. And as health is sufficient unto itself and it is only disease which is contagious, Byron, who was sick at heart himself, could only impart disease and not health. Byron moreover had besides his gift of song the element of moral indignation against corrupt surroundings. Pushkin had not even this redeeming feature.

3. Pushkin therefore is not a poet, but only a singer; for he is not a maker, a creator. There is not a single idea any of his works can be said to stand for. His is merely a skill. No idea circulates in his blood giving him

no rest until embodied in artistic form. His is merely a skill struggling for utterance because there is more of it than he can hold. Pushkin has thus nothing to give you to carry away. All he gives is pleasure, and the pleasure he gives is not that got by the hungry from a draught of nourishing milk, but that got by the satiated from a draught of intoxicating wine. He is the exponent of beauty solely, without reference to an ultimate end. Gogol uses his sense of beauty and creative impulse to protest against corruption, to give vent to his moral indignation; Turgenev uses his sense of beauty as a weapon with which to fight *his* mortal enemy, mankind's deadly foe; and Tolstoy uses his sense of beauty to preach the ever-needed gospel of love. But Pushkin uses his sense of beauty merely to give it expression. He sings indeed like a siren, but he sings without purpose. Hence, though he is the greatest versifier of Russia, — not poet, observe! — he is among the least of its writers.

4. Towards the end of his early extinguished life he showed, indeed, signs of better things. In his "Captain's Daughter" he depicts a heroic simplicity, the sight of which is truly refreshing, and here Pushkin becomes truly noble. As a thing of purity, as a thing of calmness, as a thing of beauty, in short, the "Captain's Daughter" stands unsurpassed either in Russia or out of Russia. Only Goldsmith's "Vicar of Wakefield," Gogol's "Taras Bulba," and the Swiss clergyman's "Broom Merchant," can be worthily placed by its side. But this nobility is of the lowly, humble kind, to be indeed thankful for as all nobility must be, whether it be that of the honest farmer who tills the soil in silence, or that of the gentle Longfellow who cultivates his modest muse in equal quietness. But there is the nobility of the nightingale and the nobility of the eagle; there is the nobility of the lamb and the nobility of the lion; and beside the titanesqueness of Gogol, and Turgenev, and Tolstoy, the nobility of Pushkin, though high enough on its own plane, is relatively low.

5. Mere singer then that Pushkin is, he is accordingly at his best only in his lyrics. But the essence of a lyric is music, and the essence of music is harmony, and the essence of harmony is form; hence in beauty of form Pushkin is unsurpassed, and among singers he is peerless. His soul is a veritable Æolian harp. No sooner does the wind begin to blow than his soul is filled with music. His grace is only equalled by that of Heine, his ease by that of Goethe, and his melody by that of Tennyson. I have already said that Pushkin is not an eagle soaring in the heavens, but he is a nightingale perched singing on the tree. But this very perfection of form makes his lyrics well-nigh untranslatable, and their highest beauty can only be felt by those who can read them in the original.

6. In endeavoring therefore to present Pushkin to you, I shall present to you not the nine tenths of his works which were written only by his hands, — his dramas, his tales, his romances, whether in prose or verse, — but the one tithe of his works which was writ from his heart. For Pushkin was essentially a lyric singer, and whatever comes from this side of his being is truly original; all else, engrafted upon him as it is from without, either from

ambition or from imitation, cannot be called *his* writing, that which he alone and none others had to deliver himself of. What message Pushkin had to deliver at all to his fellow-men is therefore found in his lyrics.

7. Before proceeding, however, to look at this singer Pushkin, it is necessary to establish a standard by which his attainment is to be judged. And that we may ascertain how closely Pushkin approaches the highest, I venture to read to you the following poem, as the highest flight which the human soul is capable of taking heavenward on the wings of song.

HYMN TO FORCE.

I am eternal!
I throb through the ages;
I am the Master
Of each of Life's stages.

I quicken the blood
Of the mate-craving lover;
The age-frozen heart
With daisies I cover.

Down through the ether
I hurl constellations;
Up from their earth-bed
I wake the carnations.

I laugh in the flame
As I kindle and fan it;
I crawl in the worm;
I leap in the planet.

Forth from its cradle
I pilot the river;
In lightning and earthquake
I flash and I quiver.

My breath is the wind;
My bosom the ocean;
My form's undefined;
My essence is motion.

The braggarts of science
Would weigh and divide me;
Their wisdom evading,
I vanish and hide me.

My glances are rays
From stars emanating;
My voice through the spheres
Is sound, undulating.

I am the monarch
Uniting all matter:
The atoms I gather;
The atoms I scatter.

I pulse with the tides —
Now hither, now thither;
I grant the tree sap;
I bid the bud wither.

I always am present,
Yet nothing can bind me;
Like thought evanescent,
They lose me who find me.

8. I consider a poem of this kind (and I regret that there are very few such in any language) to stand at the very summit of poetic aspiration. For not only is it perfect in form, and is thus a thing of beauty made by the hands of man, but its subject is of the very highest, since it is a hymn, a praise of God, even though the name of the Most High be not there. For what is heaven? Heaven is a state where the fellowship of man with man is such as to leave no room for want to the one while there is abundance to the other. Heaven is a state where the wants of the individual are so cared for that he needs the help of none. But if there be no longer any need of toiling, neither for neighbor nor for self, what is there left for the soul to do but to praise God and glorify creation? A hymn like the above, then, is the outflow of a spirit which hath a heavenly peace. And this is precisely the occupation with which the imagination endows the angels; the highest flight of the soul is therefore that in which it is so divested of the interests of the earth as to be filled only with reverence and worship. And this hymn to Force seems to me to have come from a spirit which, at the time of its writing at least, attained such freedom from the earthly.

9. Such a poem being then at one end of the scale, the highest because it gratifies the soul's highest need, on the opposite end, on the lowest, is found that which gratifies the soul's lowest need, its need for novelty, its curiosity. And this is done by purely narrative writing, of which the following is a good example: —

THE BLACK SHAWL.

I gaze demented on the black shawl,
And my cold soul is torn by grief.

When young I was and full of trust
I passionately loved a young Greek girl.

The charming maid, she fondled me,
But soon I lived the black day to see.

Once as were gathered my jolly guests,
A detested Jew knocked at my door.

Thou art feasting, he whispered, with friends,
But betrayed thou art by thy Greek maid.

Moneys I gave him and curses,
And called my servant, the faithful.

We went; I flew on the wings of my steed,
And tender mercy was silent in me.

Her threshold no sooner I espied,
Dark grew my eyes, and my strength departed.

The distant chamber I enter alone —
An Armenian embraces my faithless maid.

Darkness around me: flashed the dagger;
To interrupt his kiss the wretch had no time.

And long I trampled the headless corpse, —
And silent and pale at the maid I stared.

I remember her prayers, her flowing blood,
But perished the girl, and with her my love.

The shawl I took from the head now dead,
And wiped in silence the bleeding steel.

When came the darkness of eve, my serf
Threw their bodies into the billows of the Danube.

Since then I kiss no charming eyes,
Since then I know no cheerful days.

I gaze demented on the black shawl,
And my cold soul is torn by grief.

10. The purpose of the author here was only to tell a story; and as success is to be measured by the ability of a writer to adapt his means to his ends, it must be acknowledged that Pushkin is here eminently successful. For the story is here well told; well told because simply told; the narrative moves, uninterrupted by excursions into side-fields. In its class therefore this poem must stand high, but it is of the lowest class.

11. For well told though this story be, it is after all only a story, with no higher purpose than merely to gratify curiosity, than merely to amuse. Its art has no higher purpose than to copy faithfully the event, than to be a faithful photograph; and moreover it is the story not of an emotion, but of a passion, and an ignoble passion at that; the passion is jealousy, — in itself an ugly thing, and the fruit of this ugly thing is a still uglier thing, — a murder. The subject therefore is not a thing of beauty, and methinks that the sole business of art is first of all to deal with things of beauty. Mediocrity, meanness, ugliness, are fit subjects for art only when they can be made to serve a higher purpose, just as the sole reason for tasting wormwood is the improvement of health. But this higher purpose is here wanting. Hence I place such a poem on the lowest plane of art.

THE OUTCAST.

On a rainy autumn evening
Into desert places went a maid;
And the secret fruit of unhappy love
In her trembling hands she held.
All was still: the woods and the hills
Asleep in the darkness of the night;
And her searching glances
In terror about she cast.

And on this babe, the innocent,
Her glance she paused with a sigh:
“Asleep thou art, my child, my grief,
Thou knowest not my sadness.
Thine eyes will ope, and though with longing,
To my breast shalt no more cling.
No kiss for thee to-morrow
From thine unhappy mother.

Beckon in vain for her thou wilt,
My everlasting shame, my guilt!
Me forget thou shalt for aye,
But thee forget shall not I;
Shelter thou shalt receive from strangers;
Who'll say: Thou art none of ours!
Thou wilt ask: Where are my parents?

But for thee no kin is found.

Hapless one! with heart filled with sorrow,
Lonely amid thy mates,
Thy spirit sullen to the end
Thou shalt behold the fondling mothers.
A lonely wanderer everywhere,
Cursing thy fate at all times,
Thou the bitter reproach shalt hear ...
Forgive me, oh, forgive me then!

Asleep! let me then, O hapless one,
To my bosom press thee once for all;
A law unjust and terrible
Thee and me to sorrow dooms.
While the years have not yet chased
The guiltless joy of thy days,
Sleep, my darling; let no bitter griefs
Mar thy childhood's quiet life!"

But lo, behind the woods, near by,
The moon brings a hut to light.
Forlorn, pale, trembling
To the doors she came nigh;
She stooped, and gently laid down
The babe on the strange threshold.
In terror away she turned her eyes
And disappeared in the darkness of the night.

12. This also is a narrative poem; but it tells something more than a story. A new element is here added. For it not only gratifies our curiosity about the mother and the babe, but it also moves us. And it moves not our low passion, but it stirs our high emotion. Not our anger is here roused, as against the owner of the black shawl, but our pity is stirred for the innocent babe; and even the mother, though guilty enough, stirs our hearts. Here, too, as in the "Black Shawl," the art of the narrator is perfect. The few touches of description are given only in so far as they vivify the scene and furnish a fit background for the mother and child. But the theme is already of a higher order, and in rank I therefore place the "Outcast" one plane above the "Black Shawl."

13. The two poems I have just read you are essentially ballads; they deal indeed with emotion, but only incidentally. Their chief purpose is the telling of the story. I shall now read you some specimens of a higher order of poetry, — of that which reflects the pure emotion which the soul feels when beholding beauty in Nature. I consider such poetry as on a higher plane, because this emotion is at bottom a reverence before the powers of Nature, hence a worship of God. It is at bottom a confession of the soul of its

humility before its Creator. It is the constant presence of this emotion which gives permanent value to the otherwise tame and commonplace writings of Wordsworth. Wordsworth seldom climbs the height he attains in those nine lines, the first of which are: —

“My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky.”

But here Pushkin is always on the heights. And the first I will read you shall be one in which the mere sense of Nature’s beauty finds vent in expression without any conscious ethical purpose. It is an address to the last cloud.

THE CLOUD.

O last cloud of the scattered storm,
Alone thou sailest along the azure clear;
Alone thou bringest the darkness of shadow;
Alone thou marrest the joy of the day.

Thou but recently hadst encircled the sky,
When sternly the lightning was winding about thee.
Thou gavest forth mysterious thunder,
Thou hast watered with rain the parched earth.

Enough; hie thyself. Thy time hath passed.
The earth is refreshed, and the storm hath fled,
And the breeze, fondling the leaves of the trees,
Forth chases thee from the quieted heavens.

14. Observe, here the poet has no ultimate end but that of giving expression to the overflowing sense of beauty which comes over the soul as he beholds the last remnant of a thunder-storm floating off into airy nothingness. But it is a beauty which ever since the days of Noah and his rainbow has filled the human soul with marvelling and fearing adoration. Beautiful, then, in a most noble sense this poem indeed is. Still, I cannot but consider the following few lines to the Birdlet, belonging as the poem does to the same class with “The Cloud,” as still superior.

THE BIRDLET.

God’s birdlet knows
Nor care nor toil;
Nor weaves it painfully
An everlasting nest;
Through the long night on the twig it slumbers;
When rises the red sun,

To the voice of God listens birdie,
And it starts and it sings.

When spring, nature's beauty,
And the burning summer have passed,
And the fog and the rain
By the late fall are brought,
Men are wearied, men are grieved;
But birdie flies into distant lands,
Into warm climes, beyond the blue sea, —
Flies away until the spring.

15. For a poem of this class this is a veritable gem; for not only is its theme a thing of beauty, but it is a thing of tender beauty. Who is there among my hearers that can contemplate this birdlet, this wee child of God, as the poet hath contemplated it, and not feel a gentleness, a tenderness, a meltedness creep into every nook and corner of his being? But the lyric beauty of the form, and the tender emotion roused in our hearts by this poem, form by no means its greatest merit. To me the well-nigh inexpressible beauty of these lines lies in the spirit which shineth from them, — the spirit of unreserved trust in the fatherhood of God. “When fog and rain by the late fall are brought, men are wearied, men are grieved, but birdie — ” My friends, the poet has written here a commentary on the heavenly words of Christ, which may well be read with immeasurable profit by our wiseacres of supply-and-demand economy, and the consequence-fearing Associated or Dissociated Charity. For if I mistake not, it was Christ that uttered the strangely unheeded words, “Be not anxious for the morrow.... Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father feedeth them.” Fine words these, to be read reverently from the pulpit on Sunday, but to be laughed at in the counting-room and in the charity-office on Monday. But the singer was stirred by this trustfulness of birdie, all the more beautiful because unconscious, and accordingly celebrates it in lines of well-nigh unapproachable tenderness and grace!

16. There is, however, one realm of creation yet grander and nobler than that visible to the eye of the body. Higher than the visible stands the invisible; and when the soul turns from the contemplation of the outward universe to the contemplation of the inward universe, to the contemplation of affection and aspiration, its flight must of necessity be higher. Hence the high rank of those strains of song which the soul gives forth when stirred by affection, by love to the children of God, whether they be addressed by Wordsworth to a butterfly, by Burns to a mouse, or by Byron to a friend. You have in English eight brief lines which for this kind of song are a model from their simplicity, tenderness, and depth.

LINES IN AN ALBUM.

As over the cold, sepulchral stone
Some name arrests the passer-by,
Thus when thou viewest this page alone
May mine attract thy pensive eye.

And when these lines by thee are read
Perchance in some succeeding year,
Reflect on me as on the dead,
And think my heart is buried here!

17. It is this song of love for one's kind which makes Burns, Heine, and Goethe pre-eminently the singers of the human heart when it finds itself linked to one other heart. And it is this strain which gives everlasting life to the following breath of Pushkin's muse:

TO A FLOWER.

A floweret, withered, odorless,
In a book forgot I find;
And already strange reflection
Cometh into my mind.

Bloomed where? When? In what spring?
And how long ago? And plucked by whom?
Was it by a strange hand, was it by a dear hand?
And wherefore left thus here?

Was it in memory of a tender meeting?
Was it in memory of a fated parting?
Was it in memory of a lonely walk
In the peaceful fields, or in the shady woods?

Lives he still? lives she still?
And where is their nook this very day?
Or are they too withered,
Like unto this unknown floweret?

18. But from the love of the individual the growing soul comes in time to the love of the race; or rather, we only love an individual because he is to us the incorporation of some ideal. And let the virtue for which we love him once be gone, he may indeed keep our good will, but our love for him is clean gone out. This is because the soul in its ever-upward, heavenward flight alights with its love upon individuals solely in the hope of finding here its ideal, its heaven realized. But it is not given unto one person to fill the whole of a heaven-searching soul. Only the ideal, God alone, can wholly fill it. Hence the next strain to that of love for the individual is this

longing for the ideal, a longing for what is so vague to most of us, a longing to which therefore not wholly inappropriately the name has been given of a longing for the Infinite.

19. And of this longing, Heine has given in eight lines immeasurably pathetic expression:

“Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam

Im Norden auf kahler Höh’.
Ihn schläfert; mit weisser Decke
Umhüllen ihn Eis und Schnee.
Er träumt von einer Palme,
Die, fern im Morgenland,
Einsam und schweigend trauert
Auf brennender Felsenwand.”

Heine has taken the evergreen pine in the cold clime, as the emblem of this longing, and a most noble emblem it is. But I cannot help feeling that in choosing a fallen angel, as Pushkin has on the same subject, he was enabled to give it a zenith-like loftiness and a nadir-like depth not to be found in Heine.

THE ANGEL.

At the gates of Eden a tender Angel
With drooping head was shining;
A demon gloomy and rebellious
Over the abyss of hell was flying.

The spirit of Denial, the spirit of Doubt,
The spirit of purity espied;
And unwittingly the warmth of tenderness
He for the first time learned to know.

Adieu, he spake. Thee I saw;
Not in vain hast thou shone before me.
Not all in the world have I hated,
Not all in the world have I scorned.

20. Hitherto we have followed Pushkin only through his unconscious song; only through that song of which his soul was so full as to find an outlet, as it were, without any deliberate effort on his part. But not even unto the bard is it given to remain in this childlike health. For Nature ever works in circles. Starting from health, the soul indeed in the end arrives at health, but only through the road of disease. And a good portion of the conscious period in the life of the soul is taken up by doubt, by despair, by disease. Hence when the singer begins to reflect, to philosophize, his song is no longer that of health. This is the reason why Byron and Shelley have

borne so little fruit. Their wail is the cry not of a mood, but of their whole being; it is not the cry of health temporarily deranged, but the cry of disease. With the healthy Burns, on the other hand, his poem, "Man was made to Mourn," reflects only a stage which all growing souls must pass. So Pushkin, too, in his growth, at last arrives at a period when he writes the following lines, not the less beautiful for being the offspring of disease, as all lamentation must needs be: —

"Whether I roam along the noisy streets,
Whether I enter the peopled temple,
Or whether I sit by thoughtless youth,
My thoughts haunt me everywhere.

"I say, swiftly go the years by:

However great our number now,
Must all descend the eternal vaults, —
Already struck has some one's hour.

"And if I gaze upon the lonely oak,

I think: The patriarch of the woods
Will survive my passing age
As he survived my father's age.

"And if a tender babe I fondle,

Already I mutter, Fare thee well!
I yield my place to thee;
For me 'tis time to decay, to bloom for thee.

"Thus every day, every year,

With death I join my thought
Of coming death the day,
Seeking among them to divine

"Where will Fortune send me death, —

In battle, in my wanderings, or on the waves?
Or shall the neighboring valley
Receive my chilled dust?

"But though the unfeeling body

Can equally moulder everywhere,
I, still, my birthland nigh,
Would have my body lie.

“Let near the entrance to my grave

Cheerful youth be engaged in play,
And let indifferent creation
Shine there with beauty eternally.”

21. Once passed through its mumps and measles, the soul of the poet now becomes conscious of its heavenly gift, and begins to have a conscious purpose. The poet becomes moralized, and the song becomes ethical. This is the beginning of the final stage, which the soul, if its growth continue healthy, must reach; and Pushkin, when singing, does retain his health. Accordingly in his address to the Steed, the purpose is already clearly visible.

THE HORSE.

Why dost thou neigh, O spirited steed;
Why thy neck so low,
Why thy mane unshaken,
Why thy bit not gnawed?
Do I then not fondle thee;
Thy grain to eat art thou not free;
Is not thy harness ornamented,
Is not thy rein of silk,
Is not thy shoe of silver,
Thy stirrup not of gold?
The steed, in sorrow, answer gives:
Hence am I still,
Because the distant tramp I hear,
The trumpet's blow, and the arrow's whiz;
And hence I neigh, since in the field
No longer shall I feed,
Nor in beauty live, and fondling,
Nor shine with the harness bright.
For soon the stern enemy
My harness whole shall take,
And the shoes of silver
From my light feet shall tear.
Hence it is that grieves my spirit;
That in place of my chaprak
With thy skin shall cover he
My perspiring sides.

22. It is thus that the singer lifts up his voice against the terrors of war. It is thus that he protests against the struggle between brother and brother; and the effect of the protest is all the more potent that it is put into the mouth, not as Nekrassof puts it, of the singer, but into that of a dumb, unreasoning

beast.

23. We have now reached the last stage of the development of Pushkin's singing soul. For once conscious of a moral purpose, he cannot remain long on the plane of mere protest; this is mere negation. What is to him the truth must likewise be sung, and he utters the note of affirmation; this in his greatest poem, —

THE PROPHET.

Tormented by the thirst for the Spirit,
I was dragging myself in a sombre desert,
And a six-winged seraph appeared
Unto me on the parting of the roads;
With fingers as light as a dream
He touched mine eyes;
And mine eyes opened wise,
Like unto the eyes of a frightened eagle.
He touched mine ears,
And they filled with din and ringing.
And I heard the trembling of the heavens,
And the flight of the angels' wings,
And the creeping of the polyps in the sea,
And the growth of the vine in the valley.
And he took hold of my lips,
And out he tore my sinful tongue,
With its empty and false speech.
And the fang of the wise serpent
Between my terrified lips he placed
With bloody hand.
And ope he cut my breast with a sword,
And out he took my trembling heart,
And a coal blazing with flame
He shoved into the open breast.
Like a corpse I lay in the desert;
And the voice of the Lord called unto me:
"Arise! O prophet and guide, and listen, —
Be thou filled with my will,
And going over land and sea,
Burn with the Word the hearts of men!"

24. This is the highest flight of Pushkin. He knew that the poet comes to deliver the message. But *what* the message was, was not given unto him to utter. For God only speaks through those that speak for him, and Pushkin's was not yet a God-filled soul. Hence the last height left him yet to climb, the height from which the "Hymn of Force" is sung, Pushkin did not climb. Pushkin's song, in short, was so far only an utterance of a gift, it had not

become as yet a part of his life. And the highest is only attainable not when our lives are guided by our gifts, but when our gifts are guided by our lives. How this thus falling short of a natively richly endowed soul became possible, can be told only from a study of his life. To Pushkin his poetic ideal bore the same relation to his practical life that the Sunday religion of the business-man bears to his Monday life. To the ordinary business man, Christ's words are a seeing guide to be followed in church, but a blind enough guide, not to be followed on the street. Hence Pushkin's life is barren as a source of inspiration towards what life ought to be; but it is richly fruitful as a terrifying warning against what life ought not to be.

25. Pushkin died at the age of thirty-eight, at a time when he may be said to have just begun to live. Once more then we have before us a mere fragment, a mere possibility, a mere promise of what the great soul was capable of becoming, of what the great soul was perhaps destined to become. Pushkin is thus a typical example of the fate of the Slavonic soul. And the same phases we had occasion to observe as gone through by the race, we now find here likewise gone through by the individual. It is this which makes Pushkin eminently a national singer, a Russian singer. The satire of Gogol, the synthesis of Turgenev, the analysis of Tolstoy, might have indeed flourished on any other soil. Nay, Turgenev and Tolstoy are men before they are Russians; but the strength of Pushkin as a force in Russian literature comes from this his very weakness. Pushkin is a Russian before he is a man, his song is a Russian song; hence though many have been the singers in Russia since his day, none has yet succeeded in filling his place. For many are indeed called, but few are chosen; and the chosen Russian bard was — Alexander Pushkin.

The Biography



The site of Pushkin's fatal duel with George D'Anthès in Saint Petersburg. D'Anthès was a handsome and dashing Frenchman, who paid court to Natalya, Pushkin's wife, in 1835. Amid scandalous rumours Pushkin issued a challenge and the duel took place on the afternoon of 27 January 1837. Pushkin was mortally wounded and later died in his apartment.



*“Place of A.S. Pushkin’s duel.
May 26, 1799 -- January 29, 1837”*

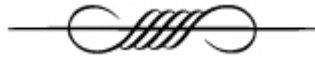


Duel of Alexander Pushkin and Georges d'Anthès by Andrian Volkov, 1860



Alexander Pushkin's duel with Georges d'Anthes by Alexander Avvakumovich Naumov, 1884

A SHORT BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE OF ALEXANDER PUSHKIN by Henry Spalding



Alexander Sergevitch Pushkin was born in 1799 at Pskoff, and was a scion of an ancient Russian family. In one of his letters it is recorded that no less than six Pushkins signed the Charta declaratory of the election of the Romanoff family to the throne of Russia, and that two more affixed their marks from inability to write.

In 1811 he entered the Lyceum, an aristocratic educational establishment at Tsarskoe Selo, near Saint Petersburg, where he was the friend and schoolmate of Prince Gortchakoff the Russian Chancellor. As a scholar he displayed no remarkable amount of capacity, but was fond of general reading and much given to versification. Whilst yet a schoolboy he wrote many lyrical compositions and commenced *Ruslan and Liudmila*, his first poem of any magnitude, and, it is asserted, the first readable one ever produced in the Russian language. During his boyhood he came much into contact with the poets Dmitrieff and Joukovski, who were intimate with his father, and his uncle, Vassili Pushkin, himself an author of no mean repute. The friendship of the historian Karamzine must have exercised a still more beneficial influence upon him.

In 1817 he quitted the Lyceum and obtained an appointment in the Foreign Office at Saint Petersburg. Three years of reckless dissipation in the capital, where his lyrical talent made him universally popular, resulted in 1818 in a putrid fever which was near carrying him off. At this period of his life he scarcely slept at all; worked all day and dissipated at night. Society was open to him from the palace of the prince to the officers' quarters of the Imperial Guard. The reflection of this mode of life may be noted in the first canto of *Eugene Oneguine* and the early dissipations of the "Philosopher just turned eighteen," — the exact age of Pushkin when he commenced his career in the Russian capital.

In 1820 he was transferred to the bureau of Lieutenant-General Inzoff, at Kishineff in Bessarabia. This event was probably due to his composing and privately circulating an "Ode to Liberty," though the attendant circumstances have never yet been thoroughly brought to light. An indiscreet admiration for Byron most likely involved the young poet in this scrape. The tenor of this production, especially its audacious allusion to the murder of the emperor Paul, father of the then reigning Tsar, assuredly deserved, according to aristocratic ideas, the deportation to Siberia which was said to have been prepared for the author. The intercession of Karamzine and Joukovski procured a commutation of his sentence. Strangely enough, Pushkin appeared anxious to deceive the public as to the real cause of his sudden disappearance from the capital; for in an Ode to Ovid composed about this time he styles himself a "voluntary exile." (See

Note 4 to this volume.)

During the four succeeding years he made numerous excursions amid the beautiful countries which from the basin of the Euxine — and amongst these the Crimea and the Caucasus. A nomad life passed amid the beauties of nature acted powerfully in developing his poetical genius. To this period he refers in the final canto of *Eugene Oneguine* (st. v.), when enumerating the various influences which had contributed to the formation of his Muse:

Then, the far capital forgot,
Its splendour and its blandishments,
In poor Moldavia cast her lot,
She visited the humble tents
Of migratory gipsy hordes.

During these pleasant years of youth he penned some of his most delightful poetical works: amongst these, *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*, *The Fountain of Baktchiserai*, and the *Gipsies*. Of the two former it may be said that they are in the true style of the *Giaour* and the *Corsair*. In fact, just at that point of time Byron's fame — like the setting sun — shone out with dazzling lustre and irresistibly charmed the mind of Pushkin amongst many others. The *Gipsies* is more original; indeed the poet himself has been identified with Aleko, the hero of the tale, which may well be founded on his own personal adventures without involving the guilt of a double murder. His undisguised admiration for Byron doubtless exposed him to imputations similar to those commonly levelled against that poet. But Pushkin's talent was too genuine for him to remain long subservient to that of another, and in a later period of his career he broke loose from all trammels and selected a line peculiarly his own. Before leaving this stage in our narrative we may point out the fact that during the whole of this period of comparative seclusion the poet was indefatigably occupied in study. Not only were the standard works of European literature perused, but two more languages — namely Italian and Spanish — were added to his original stock: French, English, Latin and German having been acquired at the Lyceum. To this happy union of literary research with the study of nature we must attribute the sudden bound by which he soon afterwards attained the pinnacle of poetic fame amongst his own countrymen.

In 1824 he once more fell under the imperial displeasure. A letter seized in the post, and expressive of atheistical sentiments (possibly but a transient vagary of his youth) was the ostensible cause of his banishment from Odessa to his paternal estate of Mikhailovskoe in the province of Pskoff. Some, however, aver that personal pique on the part of Count Vorontsoff, the Governor of Odessa, played a part in the transaction. Be this as it may, the consequences were serious for the poet, who was not only placed under the surveillance of the police, but expelled from the Foreign Office by express order of the Tsar "for bad conduct." A letter on this subject, addressed by Count Vorontsoff to Count Nesselrode, is an amusing instance

of the arrogance with which stolid mediocrity frequently passes judgment on rising genius. I transcribe a portion thereof:

Odessa, 28th March (7th April) 1824

Count — Your Excellency is aware of the reasons for which, some time ago, young Pushkin was sent with a letter from Count Capo d'Istria to General Inzoff. I found him already here when I arrived, the General having placed him at my disposal, though he himself was at Kishineff. I have no reason to complain about him. On the contrary, he is much steadier than formerly. But a desire for the welfare of the young man himself, who is not wanting in ability, and whose faults proceed more from the head than from the heart, impels me to urge upon you his removal from Odessa. Pushkin's chief failing is ambition. He spent the bathing season here, and has gathered round him a crowd of adulators who praise his genius. This maintains in him a baneful delusion which seems to turn his head — namely, that he is a “distinguished writer;” whereas, in reality he is but a feeble imitator of an author in whose favour very little can be said (Byron). This it is which keeps him from a serious study of the great classical poets, which might exercise a beneficial effect upon his talents — which cannot be denied him — and which might make of him in course of time a “distinguished writer.”

The best thing that can be done for him is to remove him hence....

The Emperor Nicholas on his accession pardoned Pushkin and received him once more into favour. During an interview which took place it is said that the Tsar promised the poet that he alone would in future be the censor of his productions. Pushkin was restored to his position in the Foreign Office and received the appointment of Court Historian. In 1828 he published one of his finest poems, *Poltava*, which is founded on incidents familiar to English readers in Byron's *Mazeppa*. In 1829 the hardy poet accompanied the Russian army which under Paskevitch captured Erzeroum. In 1831 he married a beautiful lady of the Gontchareff family and settled in the neighbourhood of Saint Petersburg, where he remained for the remainder of his life, only occasionally visiting Moscow and Mikhailovskoe. During this period his chief occupation consisted in collecting and investigating materials for a projected history of Peter the Great, which was undertaken at the express desire of the Emperor. He likewise completed a history of the revolt of Pougatchoff, which occurred in the reign of Catherine II. [Note: this individual having personated Peter III, the deceased husband of the Empress, raised the Orenburg Cossacks in revolt. This revolt was not suppressed without extensive destruction of life and property.] In 1833 the poet visited Orenburg, the scene of the dreadful excesses he recorded; the fruit of his journey being one of the most charming tales ever written, *The Captain's Daughter*. [Note: Translated in *Russian Romance*, by Mrs. Telfer, 1875.]

The remaining years of Pushkin's life, spent in the midst of domestic bliss and grateful literary occupation, were what lookers-on style “years of unclouded happiness.” They were, however, drawing rapidly to a close. Unrivalled distinction rarely fails to arouse bitter animosity amongst the

envious, and Pushkin's existence had latterly been embittered by groundless insinuations against his wife's reputation in the shape of anonymous letters addressed to himself and couched in very insulting language. He fancied he had traced them to one Georges d'Anthes, a Frenchman in the Cavalier Guard, who had been adopted by the Dutch envoy Heeckeren. D'Anthes, though he had espoused Madame Pushkin's sister, had conducted himself with impropriety towards the former lady. The poet displayed in this affair a fierce hostility quite characteristic of his African origin but which drove him to his destruction. D'Anthes, it was subsequently admitted, was not the author of the anonymous letters; but as usual when a duel is proposed, an appeal to reason was thought to smack of cowardice. The encounter took place in February 1837 on one of the islands of the Neva. The weapons used were pistols, and the combat was of a determined, nay ferocious character. Pushkin was shot before he had time to fire, and, in his fall, the barrel of his pistol became clogged with snow which lay deep upon the ground at the time. Raising himself on his elbow, the wounded man called for another pistol, crying, "I've strength left to fire my shot!" He fired, and slightly wounded his opponent, shouting "Bravo!" when he heard him exclaim that he was hit. D'Anthes was, however, but slightly contused whilst Pushkin was shot through the abdomen. He was transported to his residence and expired after several days passed in extreme agony. Thus perished in the thirty-eighth year of his age this distinguished poet, in a manner and amid surroundings which make the duel scene in the sixth canto of this poem seem almost prophetic. His reflections on the premature death of Lenski appear indeed strangely applicable to his own fate, as generally to the premature extinction of genius.

Pushkin was endowed with a powerful physical organisation. He was fond of long walks, unlike the generality of his countrymen, and at one time of his career used daily to foot it into Saint Petersburg and back, from his residence in the suburbs, to conduct his investigations in the Government archives when employed on the History of Peter the Great. He was a good swordsman, rode well, and at one time aspired to enter the cavalry; but his father not being able to furnish the necessary funds he declined serving in the less romantic infantry. Latterly he was regular in his habits; rose early, retired late, and managed to get along with but very little sleep. On rising he betook himself forthwith to his literary occupations, which were continued till afternoon, when they gave place to physical exercise. Strange as it will appear to many, he preferred the autumn months, especially when rainy, chill and misty, for the production of his literary compositions, and was proportionally depressed by the approach of spring. (Cf. Canto VII st. ii.)

Mournful is thine approach to me,
O Spring, thou chosen time of love

He usually left Saint Petersburg about the middle of September and remained in the country till December. In this space of time it was his custom to develop and perfect the inspirations of the remaining portion of the year. He was of an impetuous yet affectionate nature and much beloved by a numerous circle of friends. An attractive feature in his character was his unalterable attachment to his aged nurse, a sentiment which we find reflected in the pages of *Eugene Oneguine* and elsewhere.

The preponderating influence which Byron exercised in the formation of his genius has already been noticed. It is indeed probable that we owe *Oneguine* to the combined impressions of *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan* upon his mind. Yet the Russian poem excels these masterpieces of Byron in a single particular — namely, in completeness of narrative, the plots of the latter being mere vehicles for the development of the poet's general reflections. There is ground for believing that Pushkin likewise made this poem the record of his own experience. This has doubtless been the practice of many distinguished authors of fiction whose names will readily occur to the reader. Indeed, as we are never cognizant of the real motives which actuate others, it follows that nowhere can the secret springs of human action be studied to such advantage as within our own breasts. Thus romance is sometimes but the reflection of the writer's own individuality, and he adopts the counsel of the American poet:

Look then into thine heart and write!

But a further consideration of this subject would here be out of place. Perhaps I cannot more suitably conclude this sketch than by quoting from his *Ode to the Sea* the poet's tribute of admiration to the genius of Napoleon and Byron, who of all contemporaries seem the most to have swayed his imagination.

Farewell, thou pathway of the free,
For the last time thy waves I view
Before me roll disdainfully,
Brilliantly beautiful and blue.

Why vain regret? Wherever now
My heedless course I may pursue
One object on thy desert brow
I everlastingly shall view —

A rock, the sepulchre of Fame!
The poor remains of greatness gone
A cold remembrance there became,
There perished great Napoleon.

In torment dire to sleep he lay;
Then, as a tempest echoing rolls,
Another genius whirled away,
Another sovereign of our souls.

He perished. Freedom wept her child,
He left the world his garland bright.
Wail, Ocean, surge in tumult wild,
To sing of thee was his delight.

Impressed upon him was thy mark,
His genius moulded was by thee;
Like thee, he was unfathomed, dark
And untamed in his majesty.

Note: It may interest some to know that Georges d'Anthes was tried by court-martial for his participation in the duel in which Pushkin fell, found guilty, and reduced to the ranks; but, not being a Russian subject, he was conducted by a gendarme across the frontier and then set at liberty.



Pushkin in his coffin



Svyatogorsk Monastery, Pskovskaya Oblast, West Russian — Pushkin's final resting place



Pushkin's grave